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VOLUME 7 ISSUE 6
JUNE 1999

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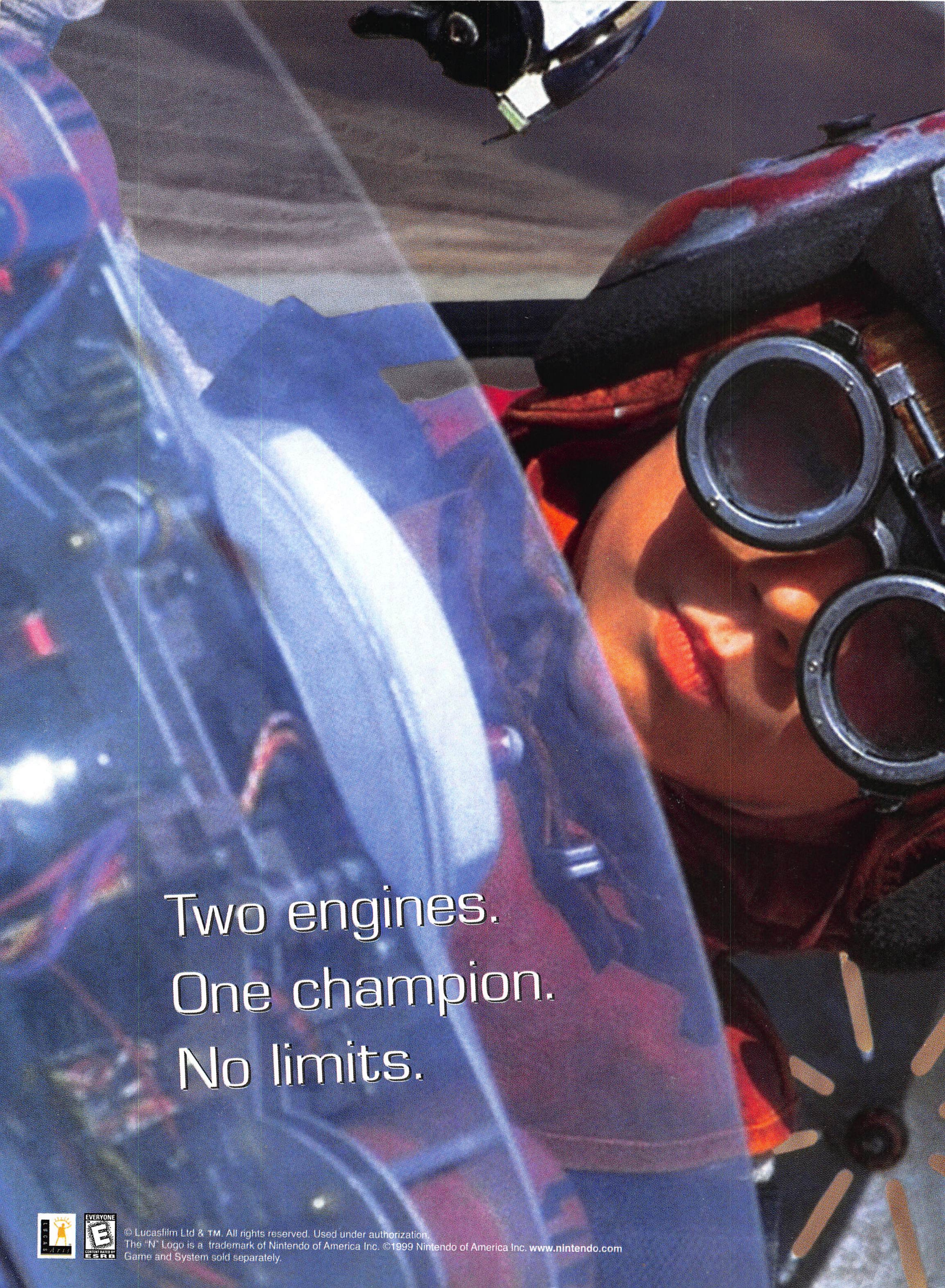
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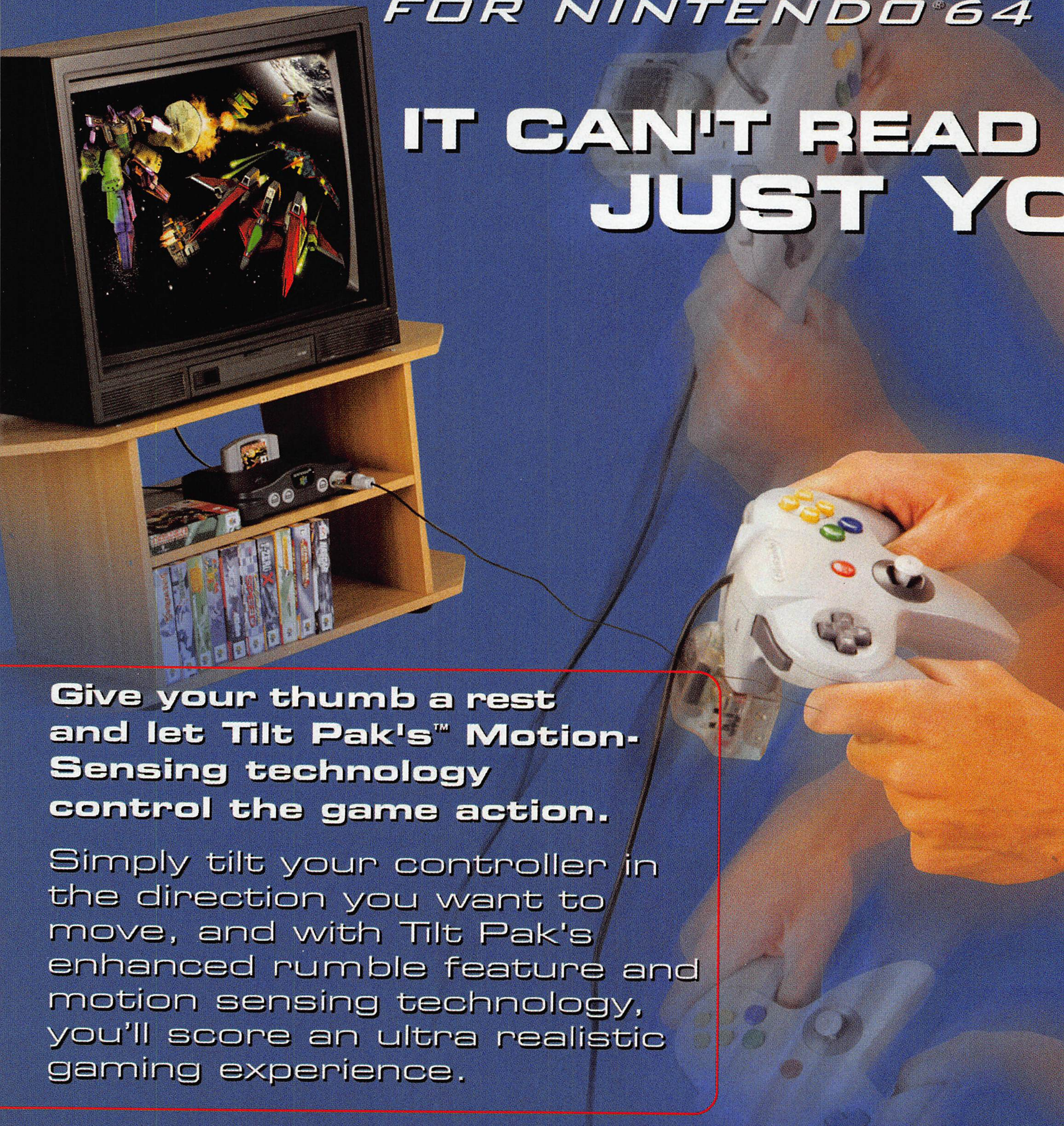
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Brian Olshever
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ISSN# 1092-7212

Initially, I was going to rant for the space of this page on the recent lawsuit filed against Sega, Sony and Nintendo (among others) that seeks to place the blame for the deaths of their children (in a shooting in late '97) on video games as one of the culprits. Instead of that little piece of absurdity, I figured the space could be better served in introducing our staff of editors more fully to giving both you, the reader, **and** the industry et al, a better glimpse into the minds of the hearty group of gamers that make up this fine publication. Below you will find mini-bios for each core editor through the eyes of one of his fellow editors:

ECM, Editorial Director: Though he likes to envision himself as Thor, the mighty Norse God, ECM is actually the butt of many jokes involving Angry Dwarf Syndrome — an unfortunate condition when height-impaired New Yorkers are transplanted to Los Angeles and do nothing but vent their pent-up hostility on hapless *GameFan* editors. He also answers to the moniker Gepetto, due to his unhealthy fascination with toys — in particular, action figures (the only things he can truly tower over). Often seen standing on soapboxes preaching the gospel of 2D gaming, ECM has also been known to frequent comic book shops, movie theaters, and junior high schools; if you're among the really unlucky you can listen to him wax on about how you're not a true gamer till you've beaten Chakan on Genesis. A lesser known fact about *GameFan's* Editorial Director is that he also has a mysterious monkey fetish. Nobody knows why this is, because anyone who discovers his dark secret suddenly disappears the very next day.

Eggo, Associate Editor: While Eggo claims to be Asian, nobody at GF buys it. While overtly he appears to be Vietnamese, the unfortunate truth is that Eggo is a dyed-in-the-wool Valley boy (like, fer sure, dude). Add in an unhealthy love of Poison (yes, the '80s cheese metal band), a diet that the other Asian members of GF scoff at (meat and potatoes all the way!), and the inability to actually point out Vietnam on a map all speak to truly American roots. Heck, the only things that make Eggo 'Asian' are his 'Dragonball hair'; an unnatural love of Jet Li; and his adamant belief that Hironobu Sakaguchi (of *Final Fantasy* fame) is the messiah (a common belief among Square-heads). Eggo is also known for his almost complete lack of emotion; we know rocks with more empathy than this guy. Last but not least, Eggo has an unhealthy attraction to ladies that are, how to put this delicately, already 'spoken for' (i.e. married).

Fury, Associate Editor: During my tenure at GameFan, nobody has been the butt of more jokes than Mr. Fury. While we constantly rag on Fury's lack of skill in almost everything, in truth, he only sucks at a few things. Fury has a kind heart as long as the price is right, and beyond that he is constantly asking two things: (1) to "read his review" of a game, which eventually leads to one of us writing it for him and (2) where his glasses are <insert best impression of , "Have you guys seen my baseball?", from "*Something About Mary*"> as he tends to lose them every hour, on the hour. Lastly, when the GF Staff decides to head out for some 'after hours' activities, we're never sure if Fury can make it since he's on an extremely tight "leash" (this guy has the nerve to actually have a girlfriend…some people).

Dangohead, Strategy Editor: Whenever Dango gets upset at our constant browbeating, I tell him to go home and cry his enormous head off, on his enormous pillow (in my best Scottish accent). Eggo's roommate, Dango spends the bulk of his time skulking around arcades and eating various noodle dishes. His prowess at Quake and Quake 2 is the source of El Niño's constant malaise and his obsession with the *Ridge Racer 4* chick is, at best, unhealthy. The fact that Dango is a USC grad and Eggo is a UCLA grad, makes dropping them in a jar, shaking it up and seeing if they'll fight, lotsa fun. As a side note, El Niño still has Dango's USC blanket in his house, where his pet chupacabra, Jake, likes to sleep on it. For all you ladies, Dango is an Aquarius and has no car — this leads to many lonely nights sobbing into his, well, you know…

El Niño, Sports Editor: While rumors continually suggest that he is merely a country bumpkin from Northern Massachusetts masquerading as a ferocious Mexican wrestler, El Niño claims to hail from the peak of Mount Chupacabra in Southern Mexico (the staff here at GF don't know too many Mexicans that speak with a Boston accent and wear hockey jerseys religiously, though). Featuring a near-encyclopedic knowledge of motion pictures (mostly derived from skipped classes in college, due to "sick benders") and a vocabulary that prominently features words such as: "coopered", "midget" and various other phrases — most of which refer to bodily functions that are not fit for the pages of a 'family' magazine. Considered the least 'hard-core' of the entire staff, Nino likes to go around spouting that "sports games are always 40% of the video game market — take that you losers!" then goes off and downs a bottle of rubbing alcohol, all the while muttering something about "working with a bunch of sausages."

So there you go: the nickel tour intro to our illustrious staff of editors. While we could go on and on for pages dissecting every little idiosyncrasy possessed by our fine staff of inmates, we'd hate to bore you with the more seedy details. Starting next month, look for increasingly detailed looks into the lives of our crack staff of editors featured monthly starting next issue.

Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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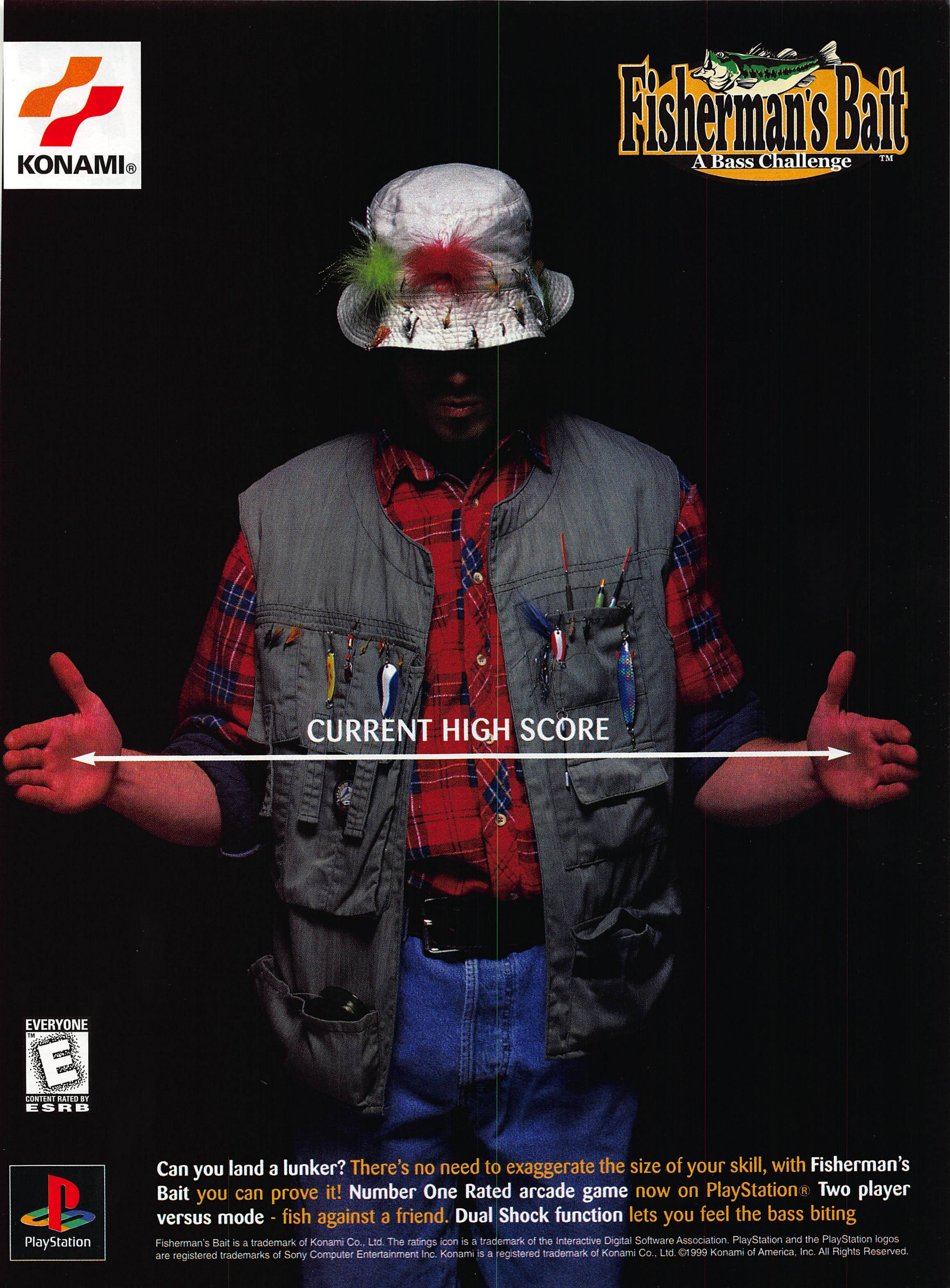

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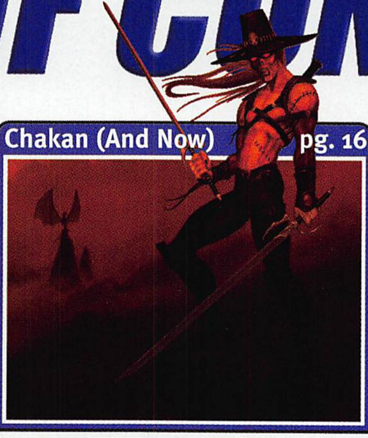
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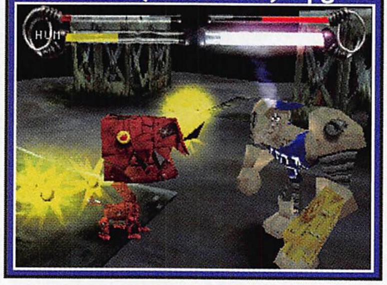
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COVER STORY



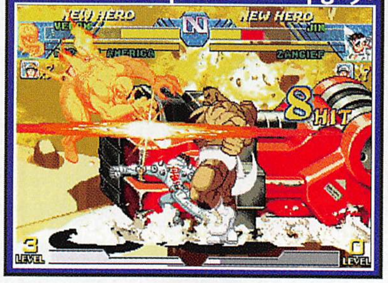
COVER IMAGE BY PATRICK "SPAZ!" SPAZIANTE











GAME INDEX

TOP TEN MOST WANTED

June 1999

Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Publisher: Nintendo



Reader's Top Ten

1) *Zelda: OOT* - N64
2) *Rogue Squadron* - N64
3) *Castlevania* - N64
4) *Silent Hill* - PS
5) *South Park* - N64
6) *Mario Party* - N64
7) *Syphon Filter* - PS
8) *GoldenEye* - N64
9) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
10) *Tomb Raider 3* - PS

Reader's Most Wanted

1) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
2) *Resident Evil 64* - N64
3) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
4) *WWF Attitude* - N64
5) *Perfect Dark* - N64
6) *Shen Mue* - DC
7) *House of the Dead 2* - DC
8) *Marvel vs. Capcom* - DC
9) *Dino Crisis* - PS
10) *Grandia* - PS

Final Fantasy VIII



GameFan Editors' Top Ten

*Import Title

ECM



1) *Metal Slug X* - Arcade
2) *Marvel Vs. Capcom** - DC
3) *Sonic Adventure** - DC
4) *T'ai Fu* - PS
5) *Radiant Silvergun** - SS
6) *Zombie Revenge* - Arcade
7) *Raiden Fighters Jet** - Arcade
8) *ESPrade** - Arcade
9) *Crazy Taxi* - Arcade
10) *SkullMonkeys* - PS

Dangohead



1) *Virtual On 2* - Arcade
2) *Metal Slug X* - Arcade
3) *Marvel Vs. Capcom** - DC
4) *Last Blade 2* - Arcade
5) *Ridge Racer Type 4* - PS
6) *Syphon Filter* - PS
7) *RollerCoaster Tycoon* - PC
8) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
9) *Virtua Fighter 3tb** - DC
10) *SF Alpha 3* - PS

Shidoshi



1) *Last Blade* - NeoGeo
2) *Puyo Puyon** - DC
3) *Silent Hill* - PS
4) *KoF '98* - NeoGeo
5) *Asuka 120% Limited* - SS
6) *Breakers* - NeoGeo
7) *War* - Arcade
8) *Snowboard Kids 2* - N64
9) *Psycho Soldier* - Arcade
10) *Need For Speed 4* - PS

Eggo



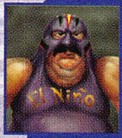
1) *Star Ocean: 2nd Story* - PS
2) *RollerCoaster Tycoon* - PC
3) *Legend of Mana (demo)** - PS
4) *Bust-A-Move 2** - PS
5) *Saga Frontier II** - PS
6) *Quake II* - PC
7) *Final Fantasy VII** - PS
8) *Chakan* - Genesis
9) *Shadowgate 64* - N64
10) *Airborne Ranger* - C64

Fury



1) *Metal Slug X* - Arcade
2) *House of the Dead 2** - DC
3) *Marvel Vs. Capcom** - DC
4) *Radiant Silvergun** - SS
5) *Panzer Saga* - SS
6) *House of the Dead* - Arcade
7) *SF Alpha 3* - PS
8) *Abe's Exoddus* - PS
9) *PowerStone** - DC
10) *Zelda: OOT* - N64

El Niño



1) *Metal Slug X* - Arcade
2) *Quake II* - PC
3) *RollerCoaster Tycoon* - PC
4) *Get Bass** - DC
5) *Bust-A-Move 4* - PS
6) *Triple Play 2000* - PS
7) *Last Blade 2* - Arcade
8) *Civ.: Call to Power* - PC
9) *GTA: London* - PS
10) *Silent Hill* - PS

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Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

Developer's Top Ten

This Month's Guest:

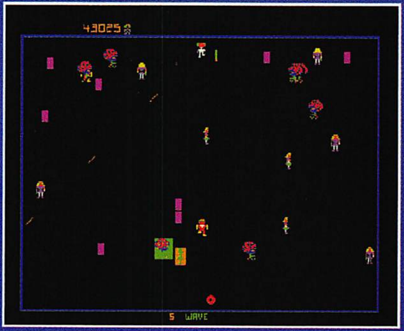
Douglas TenNapel

Head Honcho, The Neverhood

1) *Robotron* - Arcade
2) *Command & Conquer* - PC
3) *Tetris/Bean Machine* - Various
4) *Myst* - PC
5) *Descent* - PC
6) *Tekken 3* - PS
7) *Mario 64* - N64
8) *Diablo* - PC
9) *Pokemon* - GameBoy
10) *Crash Bandicoot* - PS

Robotron

Publisher: Williams



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VIEWPOINT











G — Graphics
C — Control
P — Play Mechanics
M — Music
O — Originality



GTA - London
PlayStation
Take 2
Crim Sim

Add-on discs for console games? Um, not sure if this is the best way to deliver the game (I'd probably bill it as a sequel), however as it turns out, it's pretty damn cool (not as if I'd expect anything less from the chaps at DMA). Engage in a whole new set of nefarious activities from the old standby of car-jacking (in all new, Euro-vehicles), but the only issue is that while it's fun for the first hour or two, it quickly gets repetitive. Perhaps if they'd added a trip to the dentist's office — now that would be violent...

G 8 C 6 P 5 M 7 O 6 — **70**

Blimey! Chaotic and bloody murder in Her Majesty's streets? *GTA London* is exactly that... *Grand Theft Auto* set in the groovy back days of London. Yes, everything from bobbies to Austin Powers' car is in here. Most of all, the technology of an "add on disk" is very cool and I hope they take advantage of this in future games. Still, even with all the neat little add-ons and character, they've added (the soccer field is a nice touch), the novelties in this game grow old pretty quickly.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 8 — **84**

Not being a PC gamer (all hail the mighty console!), I've been waiting for Sony or any other company to introduce an expansion pack on a console for quite some time. Why *GTA* and not *Gran Turismo*? Oh well, *GTA London* is still an interesting concept. After completely annihilating the good ol' USA, the folks at Take 2 have decided to turn their misplaced anger on the Union Jack... about time if you ask me. With 32 all new missions, *GTA:L* is sure to pave the way for more console based expansion packs!

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 8 O 9 — **82**



R-Type Delta
PlayStation
Agetec
Shooter

Awesome graphics, killer special-effects, and nice tunes don't amount to a hill of beans because Irem's latest update of *R-Type* has one tragic flaw: it plays like an *R-Type*. In the shooter world, there are two types of fans — the *R-Type* people and the rest. Judging from what I've said, you should know where I stand. This game looks great, but the gameplay isn't what I want out of a shooter. I want skillful bullet dodging, not 'knowing the safety zone at all times.' At least it looks good...

G 9 C 7 P 4 M 8 O 7 — **71**

Awesome graphics, killer special effects, and nice tunes make Irem's latest update of *R-Type* pretty cool. Actually, update is the unappropriate word, as nearly everything has been given a 3D look, from the enemies to your flight perspectives. With three different ships with different power-ups, and full Dual Shock application on nearly every explosion, the glaring fault in this game is its rather slow pace of play for a shooter. Otherwise, *R-Type* fans will rejoice, and shooter fans should take a peek.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 8 O 6 — **86**

Although the *R-Type* series is among my least favorites in terms of shooters, I was still very impressed with *R-Type Delta*. *RTD* has great graphics and an impressive weapon selection but still controls like *R-Type* — very slow! The option to choose between three seperate ships was a nice touch and the whole 3D feel makes this latest addition to the *R-Type* world stand out among the pack. Sadly, after palying *Radiant Silvergun* shooters have never looked the same to me, but *RTD* is still a good game.

G 8 C 6 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **85**



Star Ocean
PlayStation
SCEA
Role-Playing

Give me all the strat RPGs I can handle, but when it comes to the *Star Ocean* variety, well, it's getting a wee bit old. Sure, the sheer number of endings is mind-boggling (80?!), but who's a big enough sausage to get all of them? The graphics are solid, if a little under-animated (something *SaGa Frontier 2* and *Legend of Mana* also suffer from), and the combat is fun (amazingly well-balanced) but I'm getting a little tired of games like this (sorry). Nice story, though...

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 8 — **80**

Whoa... where did this little gem come from? Being a *Tales of Phantasia* fan, I am an advocate of free battle movement in RPGs. *Star Ocean*'s combat system is very addictive... and that's just to start things. A splendid blend of 2D and 3D visuals, immersive story, and cool gameplay elements, my minor gripe is the run-of-the-mill RPG music. Other than that, with it's exciting combat system, and EIGHTY endings (no that's not a typo) get this game now!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 8 — **92**

80 endings?! Did I just hear that right? Who has that kind of time on their hands... Eggo? Either way, *Star Ocean* is a quality RPG in America... is that possible? *SO* features a great story and a solid soundtrack that had me considering playing through it a second time... but 80 times?? The graphics are sharp and colorful but the CG is what had me really salivating over my Playstation pad. I would have preferred the battle scenes to incorporate fixed movement, but oh well, beggars can't be choosers.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 7 — **87**



Episode 1 Racer
Nintendo 64
Nintendo
Racing

You want speed? You want white-knuckle, rubber-burning velocities? Then you've come to the right place! Having managed to fix the ugly frame rate in record time this is, simply put, the best console Star Wars game ever. Sure, the control may be a bit difficult to come to grips with (at speeds like this, anticipation is key), but once you get it down it becomes second nature. It's not quite in the same league as *F-Zero X* (what is?), but it's certainly a close-second and absolutely crushes *Rogue Squadron*.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 8 — **89**

Sheesh... where are the brakes on this thing? I have never seen a racing game on the N64 move so freaking fast! *Episode One Racer* has great graphics (if you have the RAM pack) and blazing speed (once you get the control down). Only having a two player option is a bit of a letdown, and the some of the tracks can be difficult to see in the dark while traveling at near-light speeds. *F-Zero X* and *Star Wars* fans may be interested, but it's definitely not an easy game... unusually strong in the Force.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 8 O 7 — **82**

Being one of the only GF editors who enjoyed playing *Rogue Squadron*, I was definitely excited when *Episode 1 Racer* finally arrived at GF headquarters. This game plays so amazingly fast that I initially had trouble getting used to the play mechnics. In fact, the only other N64 racer that posesses such intense speeds is *F-Zero X* and just being compared to that incredible title should say enough! LucasArts has a HUGE hit on their hands even without a four player feature. Now where's that *Episode1* platformer?

G 8 C 7 P 6 M 8 O 7 — **84**



Hybrid Heaven
Nintendo 64
Konami
Action/Adventure

Now this is a surprise! While I didn't really expect much from this title at all, it actually delivers pretty well. I actually got the feeling that this was a pseudo-sequel to Konami USA's amazing *Broken Helix* (go buy it now!). Clean graphics (but framey as hell with the Expansion Pak), solid puzzle-oriented gameplay (with some really cool fight sequences). I guess the biggest achievement here is that, now hold onto your seats, the game is actually original, <gasp>! I know, I can hardly believe it myself...

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 9 — **89**

Combining elements found in RPGs, Action, and even "rassling" games, *HH* combines several gameplay elements that never really come together at the same time. The combat system, which is a mixture of free-floating RPG tactics, and wrestling moves, is weird. And try not to look too hard when playing in hi-res mode, or you might puke from the broken animtion. Add to that a single music track that runs in a continuous cycle from *T2*, and you should definitely rent before buying.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 8 — **80**

Konami and the N64 just don't seem to mix well. After the horror that was *Castlevania 64*, I must say that I approached *Hybrid Heaven* extremely cautiously. What I discovered is that *HH* is an ambitous game that probably looked much better on paper than the final product. Although posessing an interesting storyline, the play mechanics seemed to monotonous to hold my interest. Graphically *HH* is one of the more impressive N64 games available but again the game does little to keep the flow alive.

G 9 C 7 P 6 M 8 O 8 — **83**

Being the undisputed kings of the RPG market is obviously not enough for Square. The powers that be over in Japan must feel that whatever the genre Square can certainly manage it. *Chocobo Racing* is a prime example of this mentality. While *CR* is a fun game with sharp, crisp graphics reminiscent of just about any Square game, I couldn't help but feel that the time spent on this title could have been better spent perfecting *FF8*. If you need a quick return to the days of *Mario Kart*, *CR* is definitely the ticket.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 5 **78**

I think you can rate the success of a particular game series is if they have a cart racing game. This said, if you're a *Final Fantasy* fan (like some editor who's name starts with an "E"), then you'll no doubt enjoy the novelties of racing Mog on a scooter, Squall in his car, and all those spells that made the *Final Fantasy* series famous. For me, the game looks average, plays okay, and the features in the game are cool, but it wears away very quickly. A game for only the die-hard *FF* fan.

G 6 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 6 **74**

The only thing I like less than countless racing games, are countless cart racing games. Listen, if you're going to even go here, it'd better be superior to SNES *Super Mario Kart* (and we all know that hasn't happened yet, right?). Simply put, this game is snapped in every sense of the word: control (if you can call it that); graphics (framey, pop-up filled death); this is pain! Listen Square, it's time to learn that you should stick to RPGs (*Tactics* especially) and leave the other genres to the pros.

G 5 C 5 P 4 M 6 O 5 **58**



Chocobo Racing
PlayStation (Import)
Square EA
Racing

When *Parappa* was first released I wasn't quite sure what to make of it. I've never been too good at following directions so I avoided this cute little musical romp like it was covered in arsenic. *UmJammer Lammy* is more of the same... big surprise. I just don't see how people find this type of game fun. While I enjoyed watching Eggo play through it, that's about as close to playing it as I'll ever get. Did I mention that I have no rhythm, one small detail that would certainly aid in a game like this? Step two three four...

G 8 C 6 P 5 M 9 O 7 **75**

I was very skeptical of the sequel to *Parappa*, but after finally playing it, I definitely enjoyed this game more so than the original. Sure, it's a semi-advanced version of "Simon Says" but the cool tunes, humorous cut sequences, and two player mode make *UmJammer Lammy* a great import buy. The fact you can play as Parappa later in the game is another big plus. And nearly all the music is the game is that fruity, happy music that fits this game. Play it once, and you'll "believe."

G 8 C 9 P 7 M 9 O 8 **89**

I was never a fan of *Parappa the Rapper*. Chalk it up to a deep-rooted distaste for rap music (), or as Reubus likes to say, "white boy ain't got no rhythm." Either way, I wasn't exactly doing back flips over the arrival of *UJL*. However, then I noticed that it's rock music! Not a single broken rap anywhere. This isn't to say it feels like heaven (I still think 'games' like this are more fun to watch than play), but I can see where this one would definitely be money better spent. Too bad there isn't an *UJL* alarm clock...

G 8 C 6 P 6 M 9 O 7 **81**



Um Jammer Lammy
PlayStation (Import)
SCEI
Dance

I've always felt that fishing games were almost as much a waste of time as real fishing. Never in all my days did I think I would find an exception to this rule... *Get Bass* is awesome! While not visually the most impressive DC game I've seen, it is by far more fun than the majority of titles I play through each day. Combined with the GB controller and an original consumer mode SEGA has unleashed yet another killer DC game into the wild. Fishing games have never looked or played like this before... I'm hooked!

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 9 **90**

I love fishing and while there have been a handful of cool fishing games out there, *Get Bass* tops them all with lovely graphics and long lasting playability. While there is some slowdown and surprisingly long loading times, I overlooked them in my obsessive quest for the largest bass. The Sega fishing rod controller is both innovative and comfortable. And with the new consumer mode, you'll be lounging all day in search of the biggest bass. All DC owners should find a copy right now!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 **93**

OK, I confess to being a closet fishing game freak. There's something about the simplicity of a fishing game and that close relation to fun that I can't quite explain. Give it a fair chance before you mock it. Though it's unfortunately not arcade perfect, like *MvC*, the few flaws that *Get Bass* has (slowdown and loading) can be overlooked in the interest of a good time. Too bad the time pressure isn't quite the same when not paying quarters to play. Regardless... Fishermen gamers, you've found your game.

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 9 **93**



Get Bass
Dreamcast
Sega
Fishing

If you ever thought about purchasing an import DC the time has never been better. *Marvel vs Capcom* is THE most impressive 2D home fighter I have ever seen!! Forget RAM carts my friends, the DC is a 2D powerhouse and Capcom definitely knows it. The sheer level of animation in this game is mind blowing and the control... PERFECTION! My only gripes point in the direction of the DC pad (where the hell did my six buttons go?!) Spend some extra dinero on arcade sticks and prepare to enter 2D heaven!

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 8 O 7 **95**

Everyone was questioning the 2D abilities of the Dreamcast. Even this dango had his doubts if the DC could handle the 2D madness of *Marvel vs. Capcom*. Well, the 2D prowess cannot be denied as *Marvel vs. Capcom* is arcade perfect... period. No slowdown, no loss of animation, and no doubt that this is 2D heaven. With the added bonus Cross Fever mode allowing four player frenzy fighting, if you're a Capcom *Vs.* fighting fanatic looking for the perfect arcade translation, the buck stops here, bub.

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 **94**

For a more detailed look at how I feel about this game, see my rant in the *MvC* review. First off, *MvC* is an amazingly perfect arcade port. It's great that we're finally able to say that with no buts... well, maybe one but — it's *MvC*! When can I see a *Street Fighter* game I care about ported perfectly home? <sigh> Well, at least there's plenty of flashy pictures, sweet 2D graphics, and gobs of animation to drool over. It also proves that Capcom can do 2D (*MvC*) and 3D (*PS*) on the DC. Yippee!

G 9 C 8 P 6 M 8 O 7 **79**



Marvel vs. Capcom
Dreamcast
Capcom
Fighting

Color is good... portable *KoF* is very good... add both together and you've got a winning combination. Great graphics, cool gameplay, and COLOR, the Neo Geo Color Pocket is making portable companies sweat a whole bucketfull. My only gripe is the rather limited number of characters you can select from. Sure, there're 14 to choose from, but for a *KoF* title, that ain't much. Still, as the very first game made for the NGCP, this is just the beginning of what is to come... and this dango likes what he sees.

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 7 **90**

Hard-core *Street Fighter* players don't play SNK fighters seriously (kinda like Capcom's *Vs.* series). That said, it's a bad omen when I pick up an SNK fighter for review. Plenty of animation, nice colored graphics, and sweet sounds. Too bad it plays like a *KoF* game (I seem to be saying that a lot this month. Hmm...). At least Mai's in it... and she does have her famous animation. No Blue Mary for Shidoshi, though. Still, SNK fans will be all over this.

G 9 C 7 P 5 M 9 O 6 **81**

This is what portable gaming should be like! While it's true that the GameBoy has some fantastic titles and can be great fun, if *KoFR2* is any indication, SNK will be the one to beat this year. Blazing animation (that crushes many home console games), solid *KoF*-style gameplay (love it or hate it), and even some pretty solid tunes round out the package — unlike Eggo, I can appreciate a well put together SNK fighter (or *Vs.* series game). Now where's *Metal Slug*...<drool>?

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 7 **91**



KoF Round 2
NeoGeo Pocket Color
SNK
Fighting

Never has SNK's 11 year old Neo Geo hardware looked this good!! If only every other company could take a lesson from these guys... old hardware doesn't necessarily mean bad hardware! *Metal Slug X* is a 2D dream that showcases more animation than even ECM knew what to do with. Although pretty much identical to *Metal Slug 2*, *X* features more weapons and added enemies. The control is also unbelievably tight and the level design is simply awsome! Now just give me *Metal Slug* on Neo Geo Pocket!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 9 **98**

It's funny how every kind of gamer plays *Metal Slug*, yet you don't see many games like *Metal Slug* anymore. Cool new weapons and new bosses, this is a game everybody must play. Also, most of the slowdown problems are fixed from *Metal Slug 2*. I just wish they added new vehicles and perhaps some differences between characters. If you have never played *Metal Slug*, I'll give you till the end of this text to go out and play it... or else I'll sic an overworked and undershowered ECM on you (and you don't want that).

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 **97**

Hey look! It's *Metal Slug: Champion Edition*! No, really... it's a different game! They swapped pieces back and forth to make "all-new levels!" Regardless, with the wool pulled back or not, *Metal Slug* is *Metal Slug*. If you're a 2D fan, then you know what's up. If you're still clueless... then WHY ARE YOU READING THIS?! Well, spend that quarter and treat yourself to a good game then. And SNK, if you're listening? You could make a *Metal Slug Y* and we would love it.

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 6 **92**

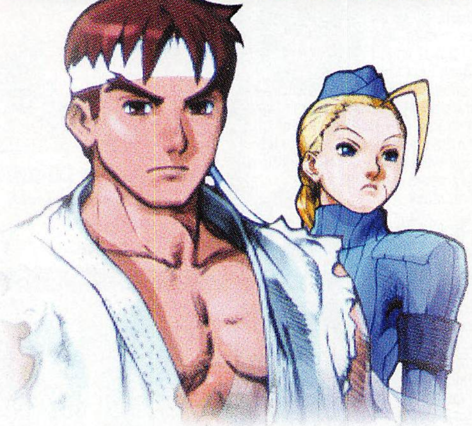


Metal Slug X
Neo Geo
SNK
Action Shooter

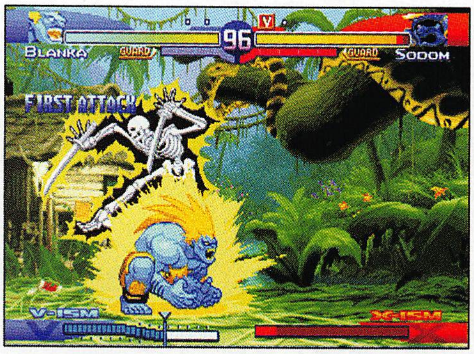




"Easily The Best Street Fighter Alpha Ever." – PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

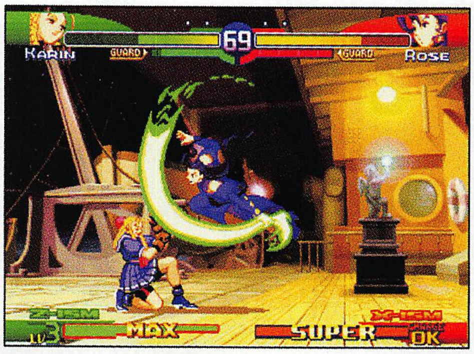


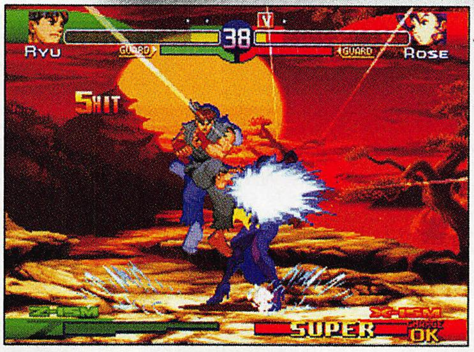


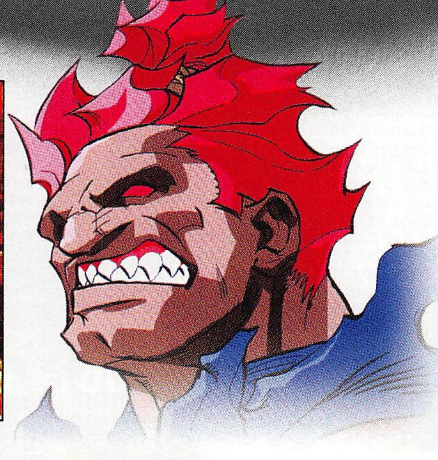


"STREET PERF

– GAME INFORMER









CHAKAN

Dead, but not forgotten...

The Undoing

"I have been a warrior of mighty strength and skill. I have been steeped in the darkest occult mysticisms and versed in the ways of dealing death."

"I was powerful and proud... so proud that I believed I had no equal, not even Death himself. When Death challenged me to a duel, I arrogantly accepted. I had no fear of losing my soul. Only the reward, eternal life, gleamed before my inner vision like the brightest jewel, and it would be mine."

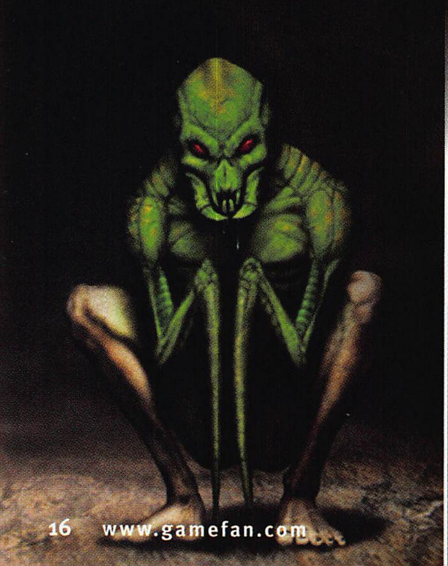


"I battle Death with spell and steel... and won. Now I suffer my doom. For Death kept his promise with a hideous twist. As my reward, I must wander in agony, haunted by the pain of victims, until all beasts of darkness have been destroyed."

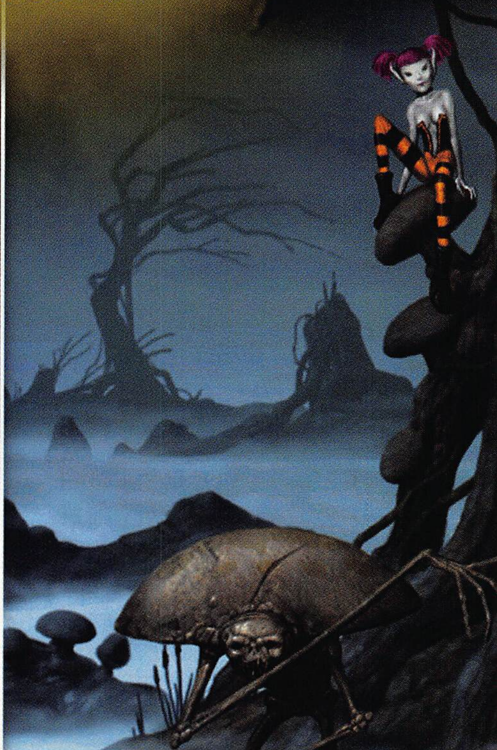
"I journey through subterranean mazes of horror, drawing my blade against the crawling, stinging, flying fiends of a supernatural world. I wade through the evil poisoned seas, slashing all that lurks in the depths. I travel through the web of evil, raising my sword again and again in weary battle... endless combat..."

"I have lived through twenty torturous lifetimes. All that creeps, walks or flies behind the four portals of the world must feel the edge of my sword. All that howls or buzzes, all that breathes, whistles or moans in the gloom of night, all that is undead, must die by my hand. Only then will I be released from this dark misery... and find rest."

—Chakan, the Forever Man













Games come, and games go. By and large the great majority fail to make any sort of lasting impression — at least not the kind of 'impression' Big Bubba makes on Ned the Pig every night. Each year, gamers play countless forgettable, mediocre games that elicit about as much emotional reaction as Jack "Dr. Death" Kevorkian displays administering to his latest 'patient' (I happen to think he performs a valuable public service... now if only I could convince Senator Lieberman to put him on retainer). However, some games leave an everlasting, indelible mark on the gamer's psyche. For me, games like *Alisia Dragoon*, *Herzog Zwei*, *MUSHA*, *Ecco the Dolphin*, and *Chakan* fit squarely into this elite class of softs. The latter title, in fact, left such a mark that I've been gasping for a sequel since the day the first one came to the most incredible finale gaming has ever known (a twist ending, that nothing could prepare you for).

However, it looks as if dreams do come true on occasion: the development studio AndNow (headed up by *Chakan's* original producer, Ed Anunziata) is creating a sequel to this oft-overlooked work of art. This time, however, it isn't going to get lost in the shuffle.

"I wander forever, seeking rest"

What AndNow has set out to do this time around, is create something revolutionary. Now I realize that that phrase is thrown around a little too much in this biz (lord knows we've been a bit more liberal with its usage in the past than we maybe should have been), but in this case, it's entirely justified. *Chakan* could very well end up re-defining the entire action/adventure category as we know it.

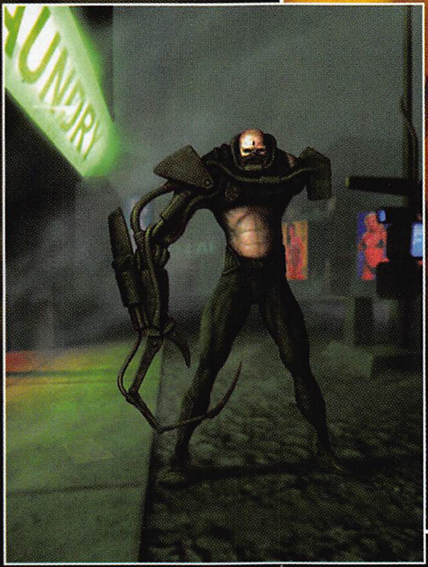
So just what is it about this game that will prove so 'ground-breaking' and 'genre-expanding'? Simply put, AndNow plans to craft a 3D world the likes of which has never before been seen; for the first time, 'world' may actually mean something. AndNow envisions a game filled to its edges with information... Doesn't sound too exciting, does it? Picture this:

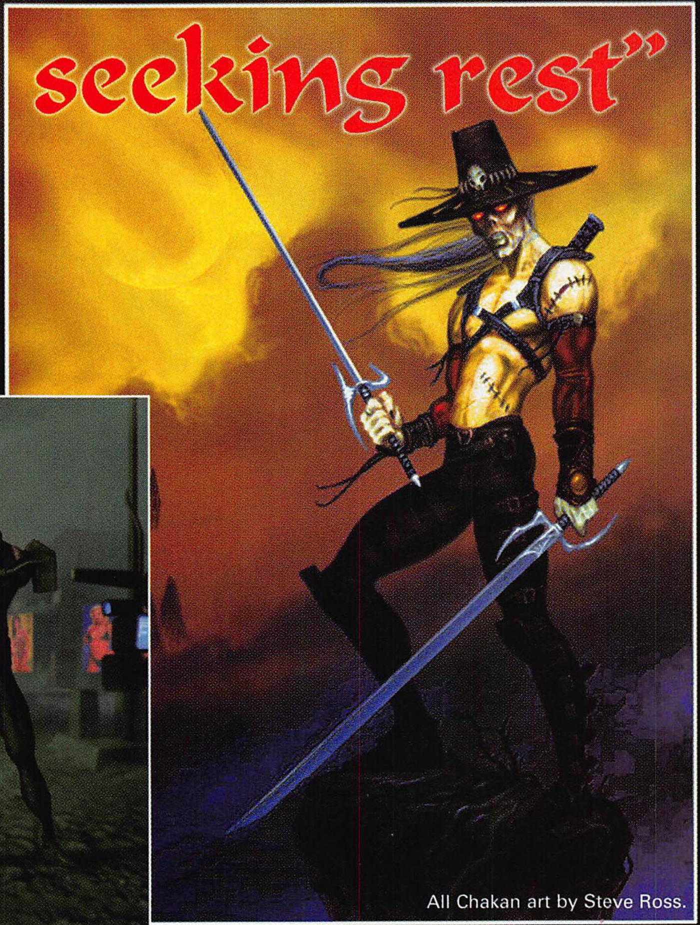
You enter a dimly lit copse replete with flickering torches accompanied by a symphony of crickets filling the cool, evening air with a serene, almost dream-like feel — but something is amiss. Eyeing the torches closely, you notice one flicker briefly as you sense something stirring nearby... something evil. The crickets suddenly go silent; dead silent. Your heart skips a beat, then two, then three... and the crickets resume their solemn chorus. Now you're all the more aware, paranoid even, that someone (or some**thing**) may be lurking 'out there,' just beyond the periphery of your mundane senses.

That is what *Chakan* will be all about: the sensory experience. AndNow plans to bombard your pitiful eyes and ears with valuable information — you just need to know where to look and listen for it. Subtlety is the key, and it could prove to make or break the game. After all, there's been maybe one other example of this style of play (*Half-Life* on PC).

Of course there will be the more visceral thrills that go along with an undead being wielding two razor-edged swords, and the mystic powers of alchemy. *Chakan* is an expert swordsman, and you'll put those keen blades to good use: cutting down all manner of mutants, miscreants, and misanthropes (many of which are scattered throughout these pages) down through the ages; but that's a story for another preview...

Needless to say, this is easily the most anticipated game I've laid eyes on in ages (since the first *Chakan*, perhaps?). Expect a screaming engine handling approximately 30,000 pps @ 30fps (that's the design spec, so here's hoping), with full effects on and maybe a few you didn't think the Dreamcast could do. Now the waiting begins in earnest... **ECM**





All Chakan art by Steve Ross.



ECM recently had the chance to sit down and have a long chat with gaming legend, Ed Anunziata. While most of you may be scratching your heads and wondering who the heck that is, maybe this list of credits will jog your mind: *X-Men 1&2, Chakan, Ecco the Dolphin 1&2* (all on Genesis); *Mr. Bones* and *Three Dirty Dwarves* on Saturn; and the soon-to-be-released (no really, it's still coming) *Tiny Tank*, now being published by Sony (among others). The two New York Alumni (from the same hometown, incidentally), recently got together to talk about games, hardware, AndNow (Ed's company) and, of course, *Chakan*. Here's how it played out:

SEGA!

GF: How long have you been involved in the game business?

ED: A really, really, long time. '81 to be exact, which makes for about 18 years now. I started as a co-programmer on the Atari 800 with *Pyramid Run*. That got me a job programming at a company called Sunburst Communications doing educational software — lots of machine language type stuff.

GF: When did you start at Sega? What was your first project?

ED: I moved to Santa Cruz in '89 and got a job at Sega almost immediately. At the time I was the only 'regular' producer for Sega of America and worked on the very first SOA-released game, *Abrams Battle Tank*. Next up was *Spiderman*, which incidentally, was the very first SOA-designed game. I was actually 'passed over' on *Dick Tracy* for the *Spiderman* game... thank god <laughs>. Oddly enough, I was born the same month as Spiderman made his first appearance in comic books. Coincidence?

GF: Why did you leave Sega?

ED: I love Sega! And I did give them a year's notice! I owed them. They were the ones that gave me the chance to cut my teeth and create games like *Ecco*. But eventually I outgrew them. I could only go so far within the confines of their structure. It was an evolution of my growth as a designer that led to the creation of AndNow.

GF: Knowing that there is a DC version of *Ecco* in the works, how does that make you, the creator of the character, feel knowing that you have no involvement in it?

ED: Emotionally it's tough. It's hard to let go. Sure, I could have stuck around at Sega and done it, but in the end the whole goal in creating these characters is a shot at immortality. *Ecco* has a life of its own. It's grown beyond me. It's not worth agonizing over. It's sort of the same situation I currently have with *Tiny Tank* — Sony now owns that character. It's just something you have to live with in this industry. You have to grow up, and move on. I don't want to be typecast as the *Ecco* guy anyway... I always want to do new things. If the DC *Ecco* turns out bad, though, I assure you some people will catch a beating (and they know who they are!), <laughs>.

GF: What kind of odds do you give Sega for success with Dreamcast?

ED: I give them 50/50... that's a wimpy answer, but I do think that they have the advantage of coming out early. In this business, you just can't tell. Right now, there could be a programmer somewhere, tuning one particular play mechanic, that might not depend on how many polygons the system can push (ECM's Note: call it the '*Tetris* Effect'). Bill Gates said that one good idea can beat Microsoft, and I totally agree with that. One kick-ass idea, and everyone is going to run out and buy a DC, making it much harder for Sony. It's all about killer apps.



GF: What do you think of the DC hardware?

ED: It's pretty damned good. It seems really amazing, although it's all relative. Now that you're less shackled by hardware design and it comes down more to creativeness than raw graphic power. For the first time, subtlety is going to play a huge part in game design, because with the power of consoles like DC, you can do little things like flickering torches that cast accurate shadows. All those little nuances you take for granted in real-life can now be accurately replicated. In fact, that's what *Chakan* is all about: creating an environment filled with information if you know where to look for it, and listen. Before we could only represent reality iconically, we can now make it look and sound real. Sure, there are still some giveaways, but with this hardware, we've never been this close before. Bottom line: I think Dreamcast kicks butt; I'm enjoying it.

It's All About Ideas... Oh, and Some Respect, Too

GF: Putting it mildly, you tend to come up with some esoteric ideas for games (who else would think of a human skeleton or a hummingbird as a protagonist?). Where exactly do you get the inspiration for the weird menagerie of characters you've created, up to, and including, Tiny Tank?

ED: Well, I don't think I was the most popular kid on the block when I was younger so I had plenty of time to come up with ideas. For the most part, though, I think there's a conscious effort to try and come up with something different. Does the world really need another cute, fuzzy animal game? I don't think so. But how 'bout something like a cute, fuzzy, killing machine? At least it's new territory, and it's not a familiar thing to people. The really creative guys are the people that created the flying carpet in *Disney's Aladdin* and made it seem like a living, breathing being; that takes real talent. Hell, I'd go see a movie called 'Rug' if it was done by the right people, <laughs>. At least that would be something new and interesting. Do we really need to copy things that have been done over and over and over and over again? The funny thing is that all I ever hear from people is that you should do some run-of-the-mill, *Looney Tunes*-inspired stuff. Does the world really need more of that?

GF: Being one of the few American developers that can actually say that their games have sold millions of copies, do you feel you deserve a little more recognition for what you've accomplished? In other words, do you think you should at least receive a shred of the respect Shigeru Miyamoto, Yuji Naka, and even Dave Perry tend to command?

ED: The way I look at it, I'm still in the adolescent mode when compared to some of those guys. Of course my goal is to be as good as those gentlemen eventually. I suppose I could use a little more respect, if nothing else. It's really not that important to me. It would be nice to have that rock star image, but right now it's more important that I'm viewed by publishers as someone that can create fantastic games that will make them money so that they'll let me keep creating the games I want to do.

GF: In general, outside of sports games, do you think American developers don't get the amount of respect that certain Japanese or European developers receive from both the press and the public?

ED: I think it's a different set of sensibilities. Japanese developers are great at certain things and American developers are great at others. If you include the PC, in fact, it's extremely lopsided. Just look at a game like Quake 2. That's a fantastic game, and it's entirely American made. I think that American developers really need to corner the market on certain sensibilities, the way the Japanese have cornered the market on RPGs. Who'd want to make an RPG with anime characters here? Wouldn't you rather have the Real McCoy? I'm pretty sure the 3D corridor shotgun game is all ours. <laughs>.

On Raising the Dead

GF: Of all characters, why bring Chakan (an obscure 16-bit character) back?

ED: Out of love for the character, because he's just so dead-on for a video game. The whole concept, where the character's goal is to die, makes the game much more intriguing and his back story makes for lots of very interesting enemies. I don't think Robert Kraus (*Chakan* comic book creator) sat down and figured that Chakan would make a really awesome video game character, but he does. He's just so rich and so perfect for a video game. Hell, he looks like an undead Clint Eastwood with fire red eyes, you can't go wrong with that, right? It's not like with *Ecco* where it required a lot of work so the player could relate to a dolphin. Simply put, he's an amazing character that makes for a damn good video game (ECM's Note: give me action figures!).

GF: Why choose DC hardware, rather than waiting for PSY?

ED: Sega was willing to step up and allow him on 16-bit, and that's all there is to it. It's a nostalgic reason; loyalty even. He started there, he should stay there. To us, I think, it's part of our culture, and it's part of who we are. However, new AndNow games and characters will be appearing on the PSY!

GF: Is there any fear that *Chakan* could be your 'opus' and that DC might not be a viable platform by the time *Chakan* is completed?

ED: Yeah, there is that fear. We could finish *Chakan*, and the Dreamcast might not be there. Along the way though, we'll learn a lot. We'll develop a lot of techniques that will be applicable down the road. When it comes down to it, it's not something I want to worry about — this is the last business you want to be in if you're going to think like that.

Some Musings On PSY and Going It On Your Own

GF: There seems to be a glut of poor quality software in the PlayStation market right now. Do you think this unpleasant trend may continue onto PSY?

ED: I think it's going to be self-regulating. It's gonna be too difficult to make a bad game on that platform. If your stuff is sub-standard, you'll be done. It'll cost a fortune to produce a game, and you're going to need the best artists and the best programmers working on it. There will just be less and less junk on the market, because at this level, one game can make or break a company. The winner, in the end, will be the players. The same goes for Dreamcast development.

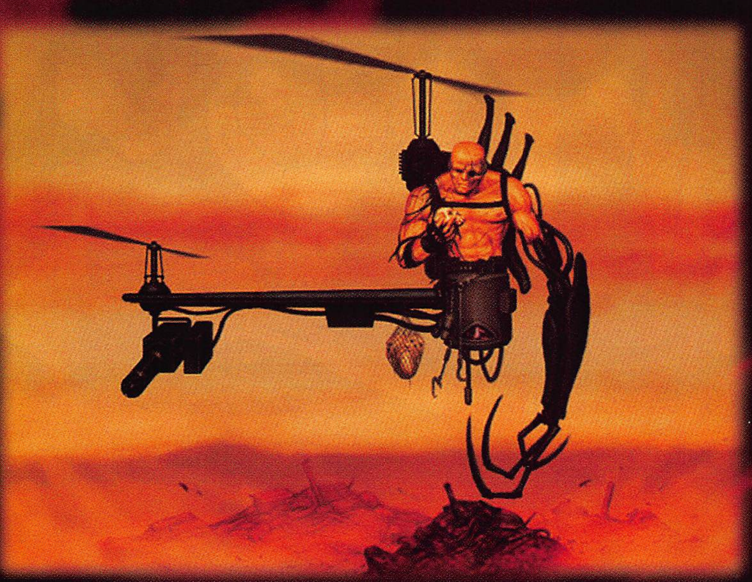
GF: Was it scary going out on your own and trying to start your own development company?

ED: Well, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger, <laughs>. In some respects you have to be out of your mind to get into this business. If I was conservative, I'd be a producer somewhere. Get a salary and just sail. Now it's a lot tougher. But we've made it three years, we're still kicking and have lots of projects that people want to publish. But yeah, it's not exactly the safest route.

GF: Have you ever felt the urge to sell AndNow?

ED: The only reason I'd consider selling the company would be for funding reasons, so that I could go out and do all the projects I'd want without having to worry about money. And that would only happen with the stipulation that we had complete creative control over the product right down to the box cover art (ECM's Note: Amen!).





GF: Yeah, and then you could buy a Ferrari!

ED: Yeah, but I'd have to pull the seats out of it and sit in the back, <laughs>. When it comes right down to it, it's all about complete creative control — not the money. It seems a bit abhorrent to get in front of a group of guys that don't play games and allow them to tell you how to make your game. But nobody will ever do that (buy AndNow and give complete freedom) so we're safe, <laughs>.

Ed Anunziata's Game List

Genesis
Spiderman
X-Men
X-Men 2: Clone Wars
Warriors of the Eternal Sun
Ecco the Dolphin
Ecco the Tides of Time
Ecco Jr.
Chakan
Abrams Battle Tank
688 Attack Sub

32X
Kolibri

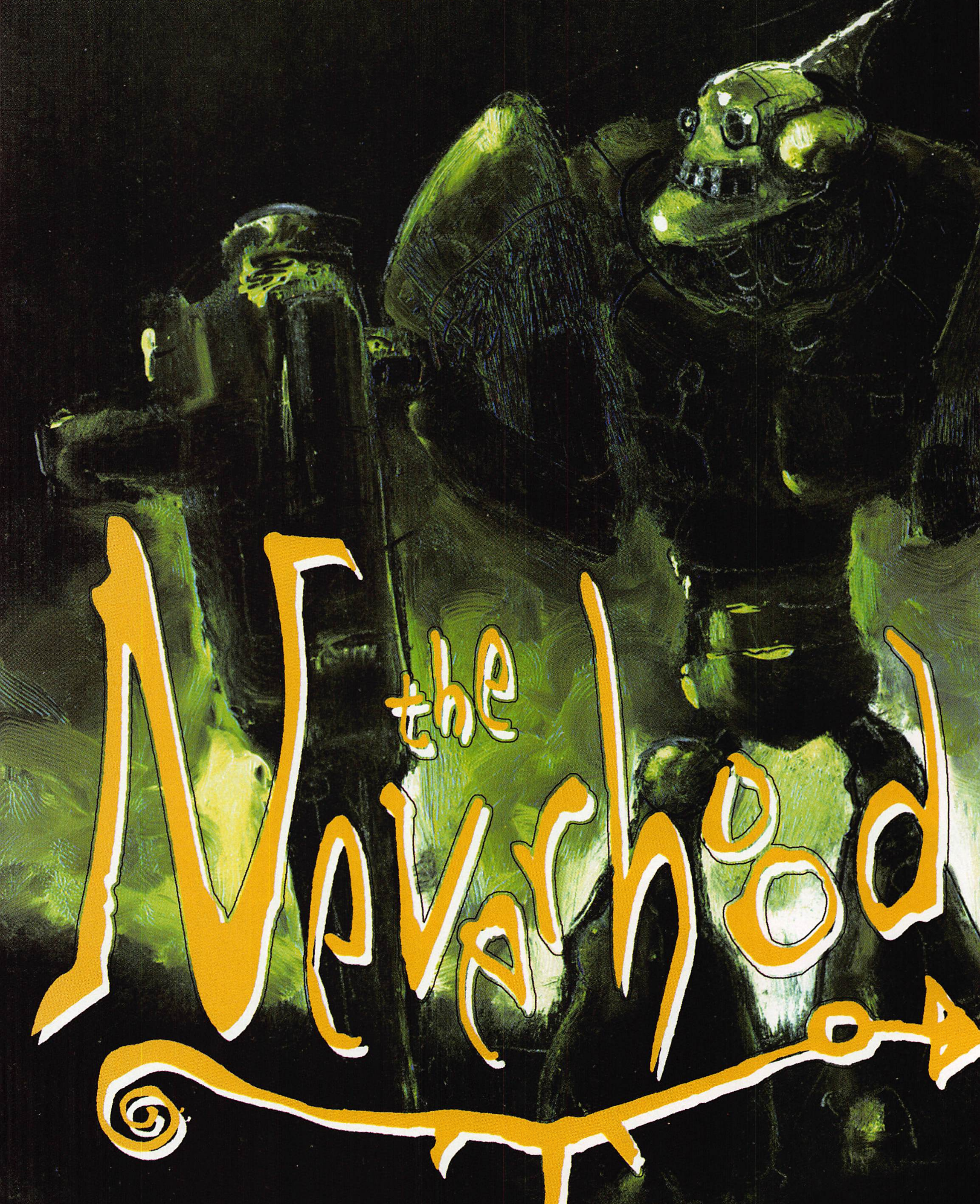
Saturn
Three Dirty Dwarves
Mr. Bones

PlayStation
Tiny Tank

PC, PSY
Virtual Ocean

GameBoy, PalmPilot, WinCE, and hopefully DC and PSY
Nooks and Krannies

Welcome to...



Neverhood-head, Fury, recently had the chance to sit down with Doug TenNapel:

GF: Have you always intended on using the *BoomBot* characters for a fighting game?

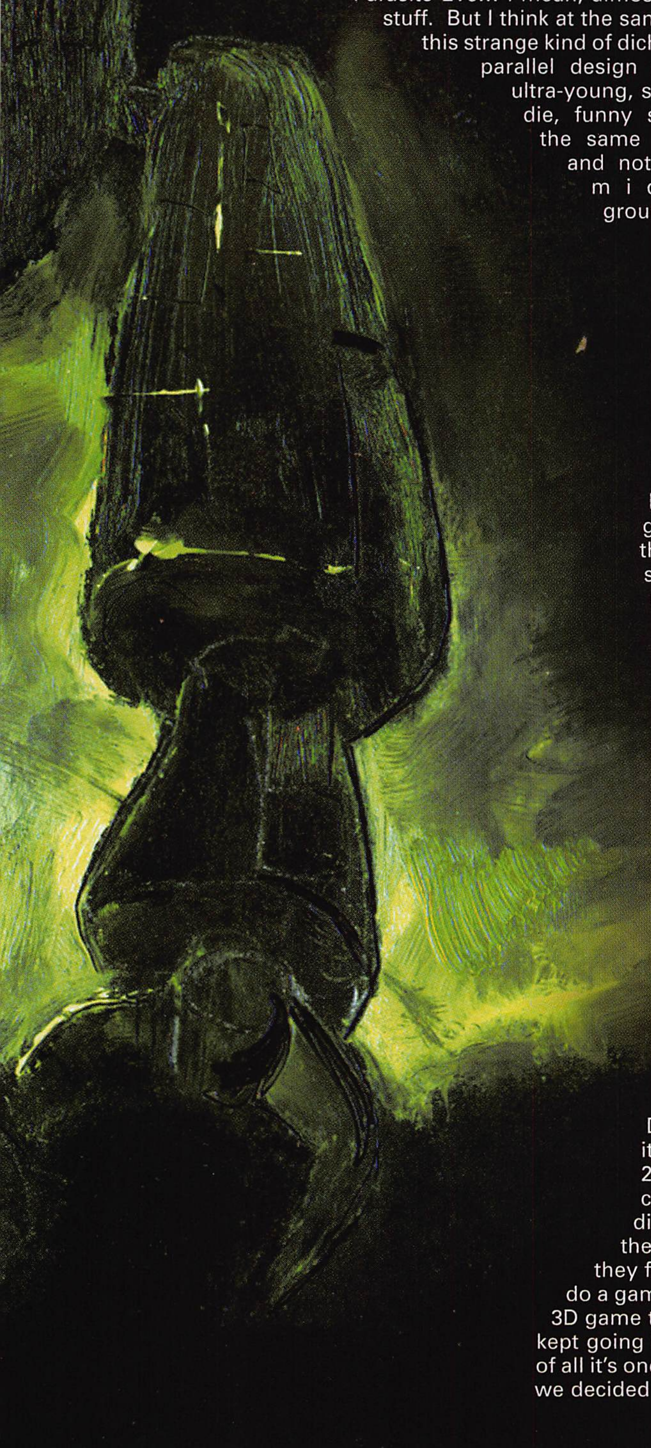
DT: Yeah we pretty much designed a comedic robot fighting game. The whole thing kinda evolved together: the idea of him doing battle, the name *BoomBots,* and the whole look. I kinda felt like there was definitely a missing slot for that in video games. Why hadn't someone done this before... or certainly done it well? That's kind of where the whole game evolved from – I brought it to the group, and we all brainstormed and designed *BoomBots*.

GF: Is it tough to sell a company like DreamWorks or any other major publisher on the whole comedic appeal of your games?

DT: No I don't think it's much of a tough sell to DreamWorks. It's probably a tougher sell to some of the gaming industry because they're so into 'blood and guts' and 'hack and slash' that you see some really dark titles come out... *Silent Hill* and *Parasite Eve*... I mean, almost goth-flavored stuff. But I think at the same time there's this strange kind of dichotomy — this parallel design going on of ultra-young, strangely kiddie, funny stuff within the same industry... and not a lot of middle ground. So BoomBots is [aimed] a little more towards that middle ground. They're funny like Warner Bros. funny but not kiddie funny... not totally young. At the same time, we're not trying to be hard-core, not gratuitously violent, which is pretty stupid and irresponsible — which is what some people in our industry do. Let me correct what I just said about the people in our industry who do 'blood and guts'... it has its place, but not in kids games.

GF: Why did you decide to go with a fighter this time around instead of a platformer like *SkullMonkeys*?

DT: We've never done a versus combat game before, and if you know anything about Neverhood we kind of get bored with what we're doing by the time were done with a game, and we need to do something brand new. And I mean we boldly go out and do something brand new, and in this case we wanted to design a fun two player versus game for the PS. We had never done a two player versus game before so this is brand new ground... we had never done a 3D polygon-based game so this is brand new ground in that area... and we hadn't done a direct combat game. So it wasn't going to be two-player cooperative thing; it was going to be player vs. player and that was simply because we like making games that we would play, and the games that we tended to play all the time as a group were vs. games... anything from *Mario Kart* to *John Madden Football* to *Tekken* to *Bushido* to head-to-head *Tetris* and *Command and Conquer*. I mean there were all these vs. games that we tended to hoot and holler the loudest about so we decided to give it a shot.



GF: What would you say separates *BoomBots* from the rest of the fighters on the PS?

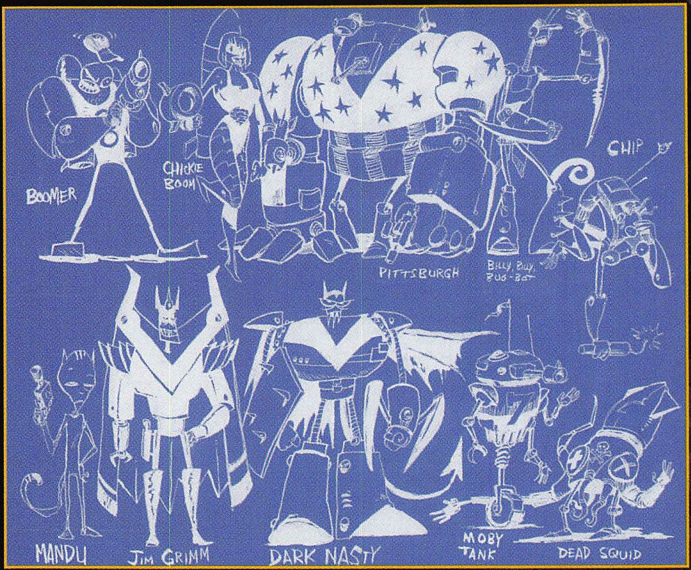
DT: Well I think first of all with *BoomBots* we didn't use other fighters as a template in any way. We didn't start there and then build *BoomBots*. First of all we wanted to see projectiles; we would like to shoot each other, which was something that most fighters don't do. We also didn't want to hold the character in exact profile to the camera... like give them more of a free range approach to the arena, which most fighters don't do. We also wanted to give the players a varied arena to play within which most fighters don't do. You basically have to take your background into account to be able to win our game. And then also I think the comedy thing most fighters don't do, they take themselves so seriously that they tend to forget that it can be a great tool for slapstick comedy. But again, the biggest thing are the projectiles which ended up dictating a lot of things about our actual game design and there's only certain things you can do with the camera when you start bringing projectiles into the game.

GF: How did you find the process of developing a 3D game, and did you feel a certain restriction not being able to implement any 2D elements? Also what were your major challenges in developing *BoomBots*?

DT: Yeah we constantly ran into challenges. You know 2D and 3D is all problem solving, but with 3D gaming your problems are a lot more complex and your payoffs usually aren't as great. We certainly had our hands full, but luckily DreamWorks gave us an 18 month development on this game so we spent the first six months just doing raw R&D, getting the engine to work, getting characters to run around on screen and stuff like that to kind of catch up as best we could on the system, and we tried working all our bugs out there, but you know we have to write our own tools but this is ridiculous. This is some serious tool-working going on here.

GF: Why do you think 2D games are no longer popular amongst today's gaming crowd?

DT: You know I'm not sure if it's just a natural evolution among the markets or it's something that has been masterminded by the 3D god that demands that the 2D god be killed. I think it's a little bit of both. There's certainly a marketing campaign by Sony to try and push the PS as the 3D device, but you know we did *SkullMonkeys,* which is basically a 2D game, and it came out fine. I believe there's certainly room for 2D games. I think that many of the better games are 2D, they force designers to simplify their games. Part of the goal with *BB* is how do we do a game without just falling back on the old 'over the shoulder' thing? Is that the only 3D game that is possible to be made? And all of our designs kept going back to that. It kept going back to "now I see why all these games are over the shoulder," because first of all it's one of the only 3D games that you can do well on the PS. So that challenge, when we decided to break that mold, has kept coming back and smacking us in the face.



make it much easier. We thought we were doing everyone a big favor and I wish we would have made it even easier. It was just kind of senseless punishment that's now not very fun, and you look at other games that are easy or give the player unlimited lives or all kinds of little favors and you really appreciate it because it keeps the game flowing and that's kind of the new market. On a broader mass media scale you could say it has to do with public school systems wanting to give every kid in the world a B and not wanting to give out any F's. There's probably a broader thing going on politically where people want life to be a little easier and funner and not have to earn as much. For me you know I only have a couple of minutes a day to play a game, and if a game just suddenly snags me and I feel like there's no way out... I used to, when I bought a game, I would work it out no matter what it took to get through it, and now I'll just play something else.

GF: Did you find it difficult to convince DreamWorks to fund a 2D project for the PS?

DT: Umm, it was kind of hard all along convincing ourselves that it was the right project to do. We have to survive on one game, and if one game doesn't do well we're put in jeopardy to some degree, we don't have other games to kind of cover our asses.

GF: Why do you think the Japanese gaming audience responded so well to *SkullMonkeys* and Klaymen as opposed to gamers in the states?

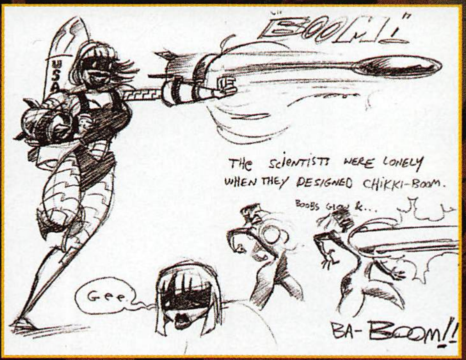
DT: I wouldn't just say Japanese audiences, I would say hard-core gamers. Because if you really strip everything away from *SkullMonkeys*, you're left with some funny movies and some hard-core platform gaming action. It may be a very simple game and it may not have added a whole lot to the history of platform gaming, other than being in clay, but it did succeed at what we set out to do and that is create a huge game that would make people laugh. And that was why I think the Japanese market responded to it well because they weren't put off by it not being in 3D. They have all kinds of 2D cel-animated games, they have dating simulators, they have all kinds of RPG games that, like, we would never believe here. I mean probably thousands more, at least hundreds more but probably thousands more than we do over here and very few of them make it over here. So it's just a different market, and I don't know if they're more mature necessarily but they certainly aren't put off by the lack of 3D when the game first boots up.

GF: Do you think that gamers have gotten 'soft' over the years as games for the most part appear to be getting easier?

DT: I think when you look at the popularity of the N64 I would say definitely there is a lower-end gamer out there who has gotten a little softer. I think it's also that gamers won't take the kind of abuse we used to be able to dish out to them before. If they won't put up with an extremely hard level, they're a lot more impatient, there's a lot more quality product for them to choose from, and for that reason I actually regret making *SkullMonkeys* so hard and we even went to take steps to

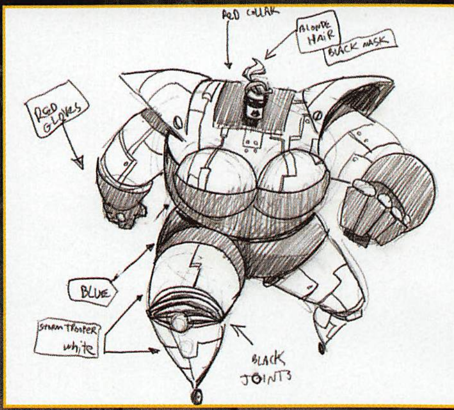
GF: Have you ever considered developing for any other console besides PS?

DT: We've heavily considered DC, in fact. Again, for us it comes down to the realities of our business. We're a 10 man company and the scariest time for us is when we have to finish up a game and just start another and if we have to buy 10 development kits that cost $20,000 each, that's out of the question. We just can't afford it, so once we decide on a development system, which in this case was the PS, we have to stick with it until some new thing comes along and we're ready to make a brand new business deal with some other partner and get them to pay into us to make the investment to make the jump. But for us, it's a practical reason you know. If I had a big enough company I would support all of them, DC and N64 'cause I think they're great systems.



GF: What would you say has been the highlight of your career so far?

DT: To me, hands down it's the Neverhood. *Neverhood* is the greatest game I've ever made. Some people might be surprised at that because they think *Earthworm Jim* is a better game or they think I should like *EJ* better. I think that as a pure gamer, as a bad boy gamer, *EJ* is better, but as an average consumer and as a human being, *Neverhood* is by a mile a better game. I still get mail from non-gamers everywhere, they can't express their joy in words over *Neverhood* and the feel that they got. When I think of how I'm trying to entertain my audience and what kind of experience I'm trying to submerge them in and getting them to suspend their disbelief, I think in that sense *Neverhood* was hands down my favorite game I've ever done.



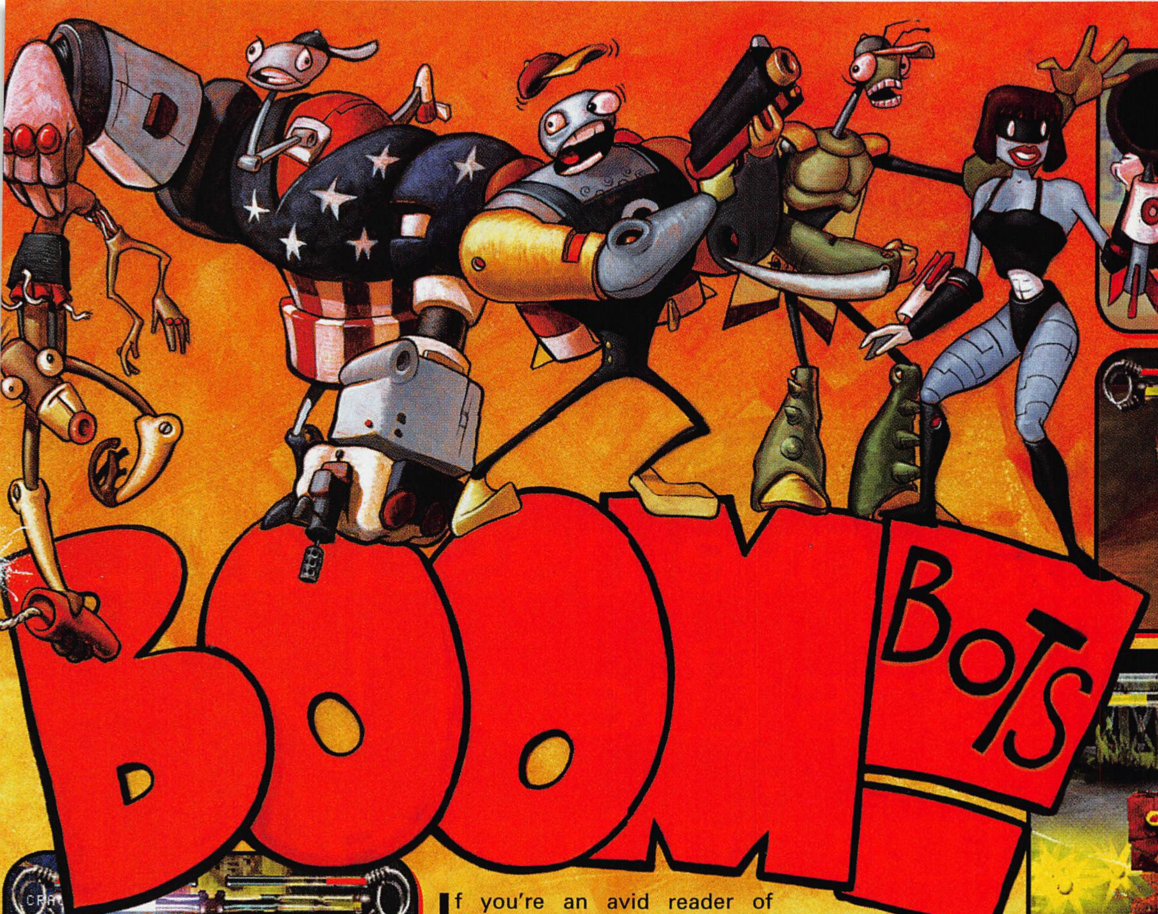
GF: Who do you think will reign supreme in the upcoming 128-bit war?

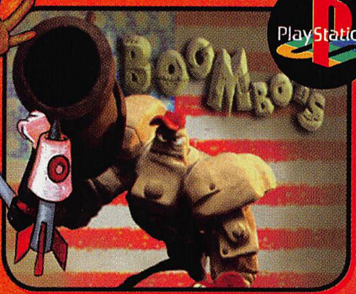
DT: You know that is really anybody's guess. I would have to say Sony just because of the marketshare they have now and their loyalty among developers and how excited people got when they saw the early footage of the PS2. But the realities of developing for that system haven't hit our market yet either and I think it's gonna be significant for companies to take on that damage and it's gonna be even more of a game of 'a few winners take all' and everyone else goes home with empty pockets. When you talk about the kind of mistakes that developers are going to be making on their next games, you're talking about if a game goes late it's going to go from being a five million dollar game to an eight million dollar game, and there's not a lot of companies who can afford to make those types of mistakes. And it's not like the profit margin is going to go up. You know games right now are selling for $49, what are next generation system games going to cost, $100? Maybe then I could see it, but the consumers are not going to want to pay that much.

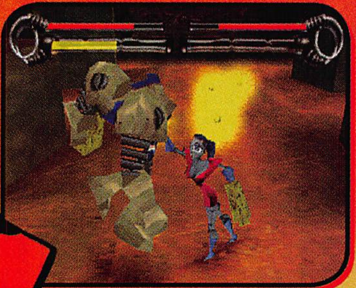
GF: Did you fashion Klogg Monkey after Dave Perry?

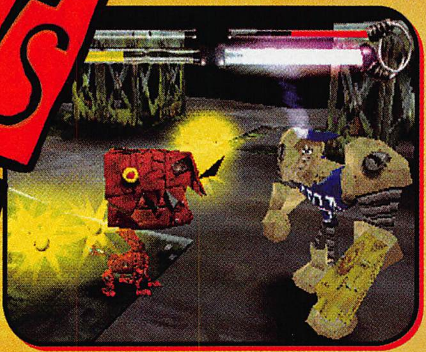
DT: <Laughs> no, I didn't, I think all of my bad guys are pretty similar to each other. DP is a very different type of bad guy. To tell your readers a little bit about him, he really is a tender soul. Deep down inside there is a Dave Perry there that we all like. There's just another guy that some of us have to do business with that we don't like. I think everybody tolerates him because he's like the Don King of video games but God bless it. I'm glad he's here.

GameFan thanks Doug TenNapel for his time and insight into game development and the industry in general. We wish him the best of luck on *BoomBots* and future projects to come.

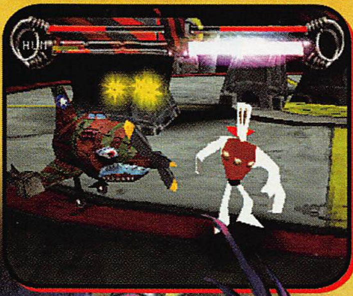


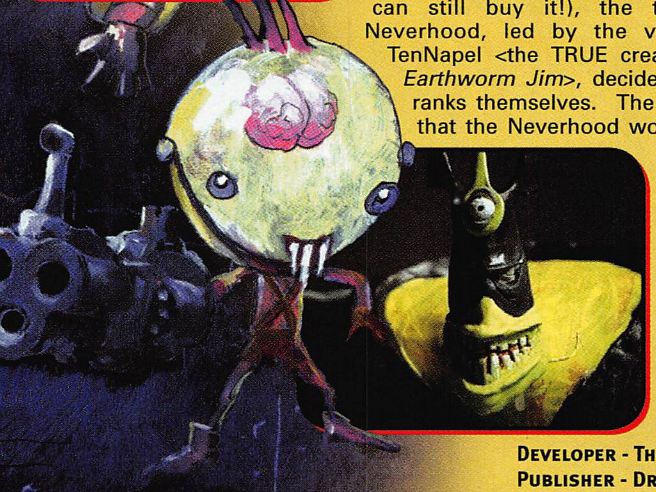












If you're an avid reader of *GameFan*, then you're probably aware that the majority of us lone editors here have been on a personal mission as of late to keep the glory of the two-dimensional game alive. We've continually preached the 2D gospel to just about any gamer willing to endure the rant of rants... 2D is absolutely the greatest format available!!

Unfortunately, this industry has taken to 3D like El Niño to a free buffet, and believe me, there's no coming back from that. As nearly every developer was hard at work tossing more logs on the 3D fire, one company, the Neverhood, sought to prove that a great 2D game could still turn heads. Enter *SkullMonkeys*, easily one of the greatest 2D platformers ever made, and a game that was sadly overlooked by a very jaded gaming public. Before you read any further, promise yourself you'll check out *SkullMonkeys*, I can guarantee you'll be cursing yourself for missing out on this absolute gem of a game.

After recovering from the poor sales of *SkullMonkeys* (remember, all is not lost... you can still buy it!), the talented folks at Neverhood, led by the very skilled Doug TenNapel <the TRUE creative force behind *Earthworm Jim*>, decided to enter the 3D ranks themselves. The catch however, is that the Neverhood would overload their newest 3D game with tons of their completely unique and twisted humor as well as a return to STRONG gameplay elements. Titled *BoomBots*, the Neverhood's first foray into the world of the 3D brawler is at this early stage looking very cool. What sets *BB* apart from the rest of the fighting herd is the completely wacked-out character design. Doug TenNapel and company have been injecting their characters with this type of charm and hilarious personality since the Neverhood first released its debut game, *The Neverhood*.

The story of *BoomBots* is certainly, at the very least, completely unique. A race of evil cats has built a group of comedic robots to steal all of Earth's house cats. With no cats around, Earth is no longer safe from the dreaded Mouse aliens. Earth's last hope is to construct their own set of super hero-like robots known as the BoomBots. The BoomBots are then sent into space to battle the evil robots and return all the stolen house cats... ya know, the usual fighting game theme.

BoomBots features 11 unusual fighters ranging from a Patriotic Robot (Pittsburg) to the Klaymen character from *Skullmonkeys*. Although polys were used this time around instead of claymation, all the characters animate extremely smoothly, with large detailed arenas complementing each battle.

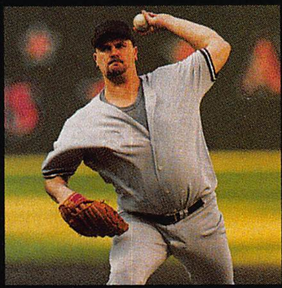
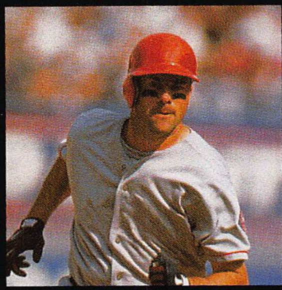
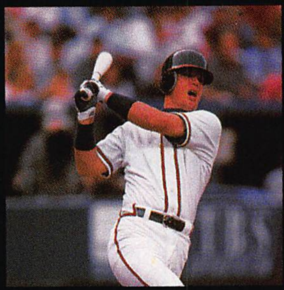
The play mechanics in *BoomBots* are definitely one aspect that the Neverhood is determined to make stick. Unlike more traditional fighters like *Street Fighter*, *BB* has been developed with all gamers in mind. While you won't find chain combos and two-in-ones in this game, all players do have a multitude of projectiles. Moves are simple to pull off and require only basic button combinations that even our own Big Bubba felt at home with.

While we here at *GameFan* couldn't hide our disappointment in the Neverhood's decision to go the 3D route, we were pleasantly surprised to find out how much fun *BoomBots* actually was. It's a completely original fighter that is sure to attract plenty of attention, and maybe even sway the beliefs of a number of 2D purists. Expect plenty of coverage on this awesome game in the coming months, and remember... *SkullMonkeys* = a happy gamer, so go check it out! **F**

Developer - The Neverhood
Publisher - Dream Works

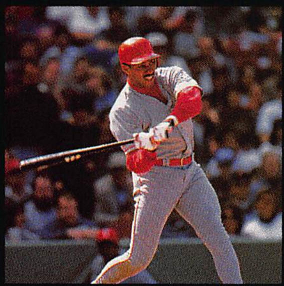
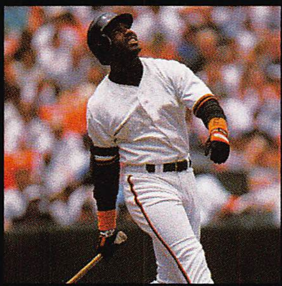
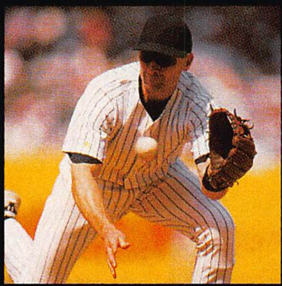
2 Players
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FURY: Klaymen in 3D?...WERD!

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- Motion-captured **polygonal players** in a 3D environment ensures authentic major-league gameplay
- **Broadcast-style** camera angles and VCR features allow you to replay the action from any angle*

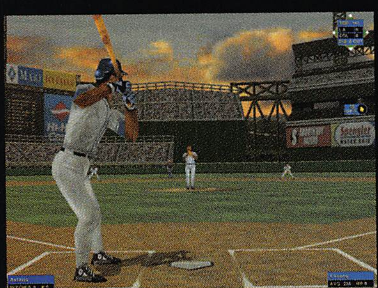
"...all the intricacies of a real game, from line drives to the suicide squeeze and the double switch."
- *Family PC*

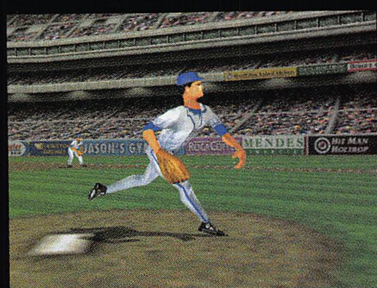
- **Blazing fast** gameplay and all the action of a highlight reel
- **Pro-style** interface that brings you into the game
- Head-to-Head **Multi-player** action via LAN, modem, or Internet*

"This game feels like baseball...great gameplay, and super AI. No other game does these things."
- *PC Sports Games*

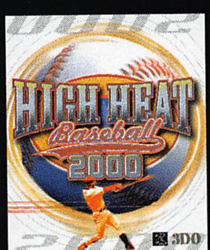
- **New 1999 MLBPA** player rosters and 1998 career stats
- **Career Mode** includes a realistic aging curve, player retirement, and new rookie prospects*
- Make block buster deals with **Multi-player trades** and **Manage-only mode** to control key aspects of gameplay*

*PC version only









"This is the best baseball game, satisfaction guaranteed."

- *Trip Hawkins, President, 3DO*



Sega is about to engage in a war for its very existence in the domestic console arena. While we thought long and hard about running one of those "will they make it or not" stories, we quickly (and rightfully) came to the conclusion that we really don't care (if you do, go buy one of those 'doom and gloom' mags–you know which ones we're talking about. All we're certain of is that every gamer out there needs to buy a Dreamcast console if only to experience the games we've covered in the next 20+ pages. So what if DC goes away in a year: are you going to give up what will prove to be some of the best months of gaming ever, simply because you're unwilling to give Sega another 'chance'? Not only is that shortsighted, it's utterly ridiculous (I know a lot of you bought Virtual Boys regardless of how viable that little wonder turned out to be). What it all boils down is that this is about the games; not hardware loyalties; not hatred of a particular company because of perceived past trans-gressions. In that spirit we present Sega to you in a fresh light: over the course of the ensuing pages, we've interviewed Bernie Stolar, presiden[t] and COO of Sega of America; Neil Robison, Sega's new director of first party development; and an exclusive interview with industry legend, Yu[ji] Naka. As well, you'll be privy to world exclusive titles like Crave's Blades of Vengeance, Interplay's Star Trek: New Worlds, and Bizarre Creations' Furballs along with a slew of other 'must have' DC titles. Needless to say, Sega is back. See you on line, September 9th... –The GameFan Sta[ff]

GF EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!

Bernie Stolar Interviewed

GF: What would you say is the most important factor in determining the Dreamcast's success: price, software or marketing?

BS: First and foremost I've always said that success is brought upon by software, and that is going to be the key factor at the launch and going forward through this next generation. I believe that because we have the finest software development groups in the world, both at SOJ and here in the US, that's whats going to give us the edge.

GF: What does the former VP of Reebok's Soccer and Rugby Operations bring to gaming, and more importantly, the Dreamcast?

BS: Peter Moore is a well-established marketing and promotions individual. He understands the target audience and who our core consumers are, and that's because the sports enthusiast or the extreme sports enthusiast is really no different than a gamer. So I believe he brings the knowledge necessary to reach that target audience.

> **"We've got over 3,500 people developing content and I believe that puts us in the lead position there."**
> **-Bernie Stolar**

GF: How important is the enthusiast gamer in Sega's plans? Do you see them as already sold on the Dreamcast or will there be a concerted effort on Sega's part to cater to that particular consumer?

BS: I don't think were going to cater to any one particular consumer, but we're definitely targeting and speaking to the core gamer and the Sega consumer. The Sega consumer has changed over the years because Sega's been in existence for a long time in North America, well over ten years and those people have grown up as well. So we're definitely going to target both the Sega loyalist and the core gamer.

GF: How much damage do you think the premature announcement of the PSY has done to SOJ or SOA? Also, how much stock do you put in Sony's vaporware at this point?

BS: Well this is a very competitive business and I believe that Sony is a very strong technology company, but as I've said earlier, this is all going to be driven by games and game content. And I believe that first and foremost we have the largest development house of anybody. We've got over 3,500 people developing content and I believe that puts us in the lead position there. Sony's not going to launch this till the year 2000 and they'll launch it when our second-generation games are coming out. Those games will be far better than this year's games and I think that will be the telling story. Technology changes all the time and as I've said all along, the Dreamcast is alive and it's technology that can be evolutionary as well.

GF: How important is the #1 position to Sega?

BS: I don't think it's a war about who's in first or who's in second any longer in this business. This business is very similar to what the movie industry has become. The movie industry changes on a weekly basis depending on what releases come out that week. One week Paramount has the lead because they have three movies that came out, and they have the most revenue. Next week it could be Columbia. This is going to be judged on what the game content will be cause the games are gonna get more expensive and take longer to develop; so I think there'll be a bigger consolidation in the industry like there was in the film industry. So to me it's gonna be based on market share of games.

GF: Where do you see Sega a year from now in terms of recommitting yourselves in the eyes of the consumer?

BS: What we're looking to do is say to the consumer that Sega has brought you the content you've been waiting for, and the gameplay you've been waiting for on this new system. What we're doing is re-establishing ourselves as the lead hardware and software company.

GF: How is Sega going to show consumers, familiar with the problems that plagued the Saturn's launch, that this time around Sega means business?

BS: I think what we're going to be doing in stores with our interactive displays, our in-store promotions, and our advertising promo[-]tion campaign will show how serious we are t[o] the consumer. The other thing is we're goin[g] to be at full retail this time as opposed to wha[t] happened with the Saturn. We also believ[e] that the retail managers in those stores ar[e] very supportive of us, and I believe what the[y] will say to the consumer is that the Dreamcas[t] is the must-have system for you today.

GF: Are you at all concerned that there wi[ll] be a lack of real AAA titles six months afte[r] the Dreamcast's release?

BS: I think that if we continually come ou[t] with both 1st and 3rd party games on a monthly basis, at least two quality titles each month, that we'll have a significant and strong depth of library between now and the end of Christmas next year.

GF: Being the first on the market with the true next-generation technology has always resulted in a mixed outcome for Sega. Is there any inherent plus for being the first to market this technology?

BS: Being first is always a challenge, but [I] believe that because we'll have the content, we'll be able to drive the installed user base that we need.

Neal Robison Interviewed

GF: Let's start from the top: What exactly is your position at Sega of America?

NR: My position is the Group Director of First Party Licensing for SoA. And up until last week, I was the Director of Developer Support.

GF: From a developer's point of view, how is the relationship between SoJ, SoA, and SoE been in regards to sharing technology secrets and ideas?

NR: It's actually been very good. That was one of the key things I tried to setup when I first came to Sega 2 years ago for the Dreamcast project. What we've specifically done is identify a single technical point of contact between the organizations, so communication flow was really solid. We hold regular meetings in Tokyo where we do worldwide technical support roundups to make sure that tools and techniques were there to be shared.

GF: How easy is it to develop a game for Dreamcast?

NR: It depends on if you've done any game development before. There's two different approaches: One is aimed more to the traditional console developers. These are guys who are used to getting down pretty close to the 'metal', and really tweaking out as much performance as possible. The other developer environment is the Windows CE for Dreamcast. And this is aimed for the PC developers, and so it has pretty much everything from the Win 32 environment available. Programmers who are familiar this environment, particularly with Direct X, will be able to get started quite easily.

GF: Are all of these technology secrets openly shared with developers regardless of size? Does a large developer have the "inside track" compared to a smaller studio?

NR: The way we've structured developer support is that we have made sure the same documentation is delivered to everybody, and the same questions are answered for everybody. We setup an early communication system which I can't go into full detail, but this system allows anybody in the development community to ask any kind of question and the answer goes out to everybody. We really share expertise from the big guys and the small guys. Obviously, as we move forward and certain publishers commit resources and are ready to move with launch titles, we'll put dedicated support gathered from their experiences [of producing and making a launch title] into the documentation.

GF: In the past, Sega has been heavily criticized for the lack of developer support. Besides the operation of a 24-hour tech support line, and your other lines of communication with developers, what else has Sega done to ease development woes for third parties?

NR: I can't agree more that Sega has really fumbled this in the past. That's the reason why I was brought aboard; to rectify the situation. Essentially, it started with not just technical information, but with the attitude at Sega that the third parties were an integral part of the Dreamcast project. In the past, Sega has primarily relied on first party developers and not development. But when I get a comment back from EA saying that this is the best technical support we've ever seen, then we began to see that we'd "turned the corner" and we're doing something right.

GF: Sega has been selling dev kits at a very inexpensive price. This would lead one to believe that the kits are inexpensive to produce. Assuming this is the case, what is the DC development kit comprised of and is it enough to harness the console's full potential? Would developers have to get extra workstations (i.e. SGI stations) to tap the consoles fully?

NR: You sorta of have to look at what development is all about. The PC is simply used as a way to communicate aboard the "river" of code and 3D modeling and artwork to the actual DC system. The DC does not sit inside the PC, it is an external unit. So you can use whatever you want to generate the content, whether that's a Mac, PC, or SGI, and then the PC is used to transmit that information. We went out to talk to developers before we designed the development tools, and the thing we heard back from that community was, "Please make it PC-based all the way through," and because PC's are cheap enough now and the tool of choice, there's enough 3D tools on there that we don't wanna move up to SGI's because I've heard from a lot of developers that having to buy a $40,000 system just to do an N64 game is killing them. So we tried to make everything as low cost as possible, and I'm glad that to hear that's the feedback from the community.

GF: Recently, Sega has said the Dreamcast will have DVD capabilities. Does this mean that the current system will feature an add-on drive, a possibility of upgrading the current drive to handle DVD, or is this alluding to the fact that Sega's next system will have DVD?

NR: It's not another console beyond Dreamcast. Essentially, when we went and designed the architecture, we originally had DVD in mind, but the problem was the cost of the DVD laser mechanism for reading DVDs is still too high. In addition, the cost of manufacturing blank discs and manufacturing DVD discs is too high for the publisher, so that means they would have to charge more for the game. Plus, the actual DVD manufacturing facilities would have to invest a lot of money in terms of new equipment. And at the time that we were gonna introduce the DC, it's just not appropriate. Now, we did "bend" the DC architecture for a DVD mechanism, so that can be added whenever we feel it's the right time for the consumer and the publisher.

"I would say, without a doubt, that the Sega Dreamcast is completely capable of reproducing Model 3 experiences." -Neil Robison

GF: With the introduction of Sega Model 3 arcade ports like *Virtua Fighter 3tb* and *Sega Rally 2*, which were not flawless ports, does the DC really have the raw horsepower to replicate Model 3 games, and if so, why haven't we seen any ports that have been been "arcade perfect?"

NR: I would say, without a doubt, that the Sega Dreamcast is completely capable of reproducing Model 3 experiences. The first two titles (*VF3* and *Sega Rally 2*) were very, very early in the DC development cycle. And we have engineers really learning how to harness the power of the DC. I would look to upcoming titles to give you a better idea of the machine's capabilities in respect to Model 3 ports. Looking at things like *Shen Mue* from Yu Suzuki's team, where you have absolute Model 3 performance — those guys have never worked on anything but Model 3 before. In addition, the team that made the DC version of *Soul Calibur* from Namco has made it look astonishing. I'm not sure if you've seen it...

GF: Oh we have... it's stunning.

NR: ...And that's better than the arcade experience. In addition, we've got some developers in the US with arcade titles out, and the creators of those arcade games have indicated that the visual integrity and quality is better on DC than anything they've seen in arcades.

GF: We've received word that licensees have yet to receive code and/or tools that would allow them to incorporate Internet play in their games. If Internet play is to be a big part of the DC's success, isn't this an odd omission at this stage of the game?

NR: There has been delivery of network-based API's (Application Programmer's Interface) already to the developers that are working on launch titles.

GF: With Sega trying to be the comeback kid, many regard Sony's announcement of PSY as a way to steal Sega's thunder. What are your thoughts on the PSY specs and how much credence do you lend to them?

NR: I have to start out by saying I have the utmost respect to Ken Kataragi and his engineers because they've done some amazing things in the past. And knowing what the man is capable of, I think they're going to do a great job on their next generation console. That said, I think any time you do a hardware spec release to the public — I've been involved in several myself, and I wouldn't take those initial numbers to heart. The quote of "60 or 70 million polygons per second" is an interesting number. You just have to dig a little bit deeper into exactly what that means, so we're all comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges. I think it's going to be a great machine and a great competitor to the Dreamcast. I think it's going to rival DC's capabilities. I think that some of the decisions that they've made about their development tools and the way their going to hire developers to work is going to make it a bit tougher for many developers. I'm sure you've seen the quote from Square saying, "This is really going to separate the men from the boys." And I think that the additional cost is going to send a message, creating a whole new learning curve for a lot of developers.

GF: So you don't expect their "middeware" to alleviate much of that? I've talked to a lot of the smaller developers and they're kind of complaining now that they're going to have to hire ten 3D modelers and celebrity artists, because if you don't have good art direction, your game is going to look lackluster on PSY. So do you really think it's going to be a problem between developers making games for the PS2?

NR: I think it's going to make it difficult for a lot of the smaller developers without huge art resources. Hopefully, they [Sony] will take care of that; it's just a huge challenge they've set in front of themselves.

GameFan would like to thank Mr. Stolar and Mr. Robison for taking time out of their busy schedules and wish them and Dreamcast all the best in the future.


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off the web and take your gaming
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Because in this life, and the next,
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If you choose not to give to your friends, you may have to give up your friends.
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an interview with Sonic Team's Yuji Naka





Yuji Naka was born on September 17, 1965. He Joined Sega in 1984 as a programmer and was appointed as the Vice President of STI (Sega Technical Institute) in 1991 after the mega-hit *Sonic the Hedgehog*. He Returned to Japan to prepare for Sega Saturn launch and became the general manager of CS R&D Department #3 (a.k.a. Sonic Team) when he was 30 years old, the youngest in the position at Sega.

GameFan has secured a coup: an interview with the legend behind such series as Phantasy Star, Sonic the Hedgehog and NiGHTS. Needless to say this was a bit of an overwhelming experience for us (Fury's heart nearly stopped). In the following interview, Naka-san reveals info about Sonic Adventure, and quite a number of hints at the existence of the further adventure of NiGHTS on Dreamcast. So what are you waiting for? Read it!

GF: Has it been difficult over the years being referred to as "the other Miyamoto?" And if so, how do you feel it has affected your ability to produce quality titles?

YN: I have always admired his work. His games are very elaborate. However, I do not intend to compete with him, as I have my own style. I focus more on gameplay fluency.

GF: What was your take on the lack of a 'true,' produced by Sonic Team, Sonic game for the Saturn? Why wasn't there an all-new, Sonic Team-produced Sonic game on Saturn?

YN: Although Sonic R and Sonic Blast were developed outside of Sega, the concept was originated by Sonic Team. I believed it was more important at that time to finalize those titles within the limited time frame we had. I also had hoped to launch a brand new character on Saturn and began to develop NiGHTS right after Sonic and Knuckles was finished on Genesis.

GF: Do you feel that, with the introduction of more sophisticated hardware like the DC or the upcoming PSY, developers are spending more time trying to create spectacular visuals, but are sorely lacking in the gameplay department?

YN: Yes, I strongly agree. For example, lately I have been toying with the idea of possibly developing a game for, say, a VMU type of platform. Games should not be judged by graphics alone; gameplay is much more important. I always try my best not to forget the passion I had when I started creating games.

GF: Do you feel that American gamers will pick up on the whole A-Life aspects in Sonic Adventure? If so, is the goal to make A-Life as popular as Nintendo's Pokemon in the states (animated TV, trading cards, plush toys, etc.)?

YN: I am not sure if Chao will become popular in the US. However, I feel the concept of A-Life is very interesting and therefore I hope many consumers in the US will enjoy playing the A-Life aspects. I also hope that the A-Life aspects of the game will help increase the number of people that are Sonic fans. Chao was incorporated in the game because I hoped to provide the means to enable those who buy the game to continue to enjoy playing it even after they have cleared the main adventure story. If Chao gets popular and the market demand is there, I will be happy to consider merchandising characters such as Chao and other characters in the game.

GF: What were the major technical challenges in creating Sonic Adventure?

YN: The biggest challenge was to try to develop the game at the same time as the hardware was being developed. I honestly did everything in my power to ensure that Sonic Adventure would adeqautely harness the DC's power, and I am satisfied with my work. I went as far as to take part in the Dreamcast hardware development as well as the software library. It was a very good year for me in that sense.

GF: Also, are you planning on re-using the SA engine in any upcoming titles?

YN: Since the Dreamcast hardware and the libraries are continually evolving, the Sonic Adventure engine will evolve as well and become more powerful. It may be possible that parts of the engine will be used in future products.

GF: Were there any features you would have liked to have included in NiGHTS that you were unable to implement due to the Saturn's hardware limitations?

YN: No comment. But if there were, I would surely be implementing them into my next project (ECM's Note: hmmmm...).

GF: What type of games, other than your own, do you enjoy playing?

YN: I like racing games. Other than those, I liked Alone in the Dark, Lemmings and Tomb Raider. But recently I find it difficult to find games that offer new appeal.

GF: Do you see online gaming becoming more popular in Japan?



YN: I hope so. I certainly intend to be closely involved in creating online playable games.

GF: In future games, what special online features would you like to see included?

YN: I cannot comment on this. Keep an eye out for my future games.

GF: Who and what are your major influences outside of the gaming industry?

YN: Entertainment in general inspires me. Theme parks, music, films, amusement centers, etc. My favorite musical group is YMO (Yellow Magic Orchestra, a Japanese techno group). I also like Hayao Miyazaki (Japan's very famous animation movie director) and Robert Zemeckis.

GF: Knowing how fast technology is advancing these days, where do you see the industry in five years?

YN: I truly hope the games will eventually return to their true origin, their true nature — and that is gameplay.

GF: Which of your creations do you consider your personal favorite?

YN: Girls Garden and Phantasy Star. I am also extremely satisfied with the work I have done on Sonic Adventure.

GF: Are there any US game developers that you're keeping an eye on?

YN: Westwood, Blizzard, Visual Concepts and Naughty Dog to name a few.

GF: How soon will we see NiGHTS on the Dreamcast?

YN: I have no comment. But I am willing to provide what gamers demand (ECM's Note: double hmmm...).

GF: Where did you get the idea for the "A-Life" in Sonic Adventure?

YN: A book inspired me in the concept of A-Life.

GF: Are you working on any original titles for Dreamcast?

YN: No, not at the moment.

GF: Have you thought about working on arcade titles? Maybe a Sonic arcade game on the NAOMI hardware?

YN: I have always been interested in developing arcade games. Would you like to see Sonic on NAOMI?

GF: Yes! <Ahem>, as one of Sega's top game producers, do you feel any sort of inter-company competition from renowned in-house development teams such as the various AM factions or Team Andromeda?

YN: No, I have never felt such competition within the company. I am fortunate to be able to work within a conflict-free environment in that regard.

GameFan would like to thank Mr. Naka for taking the time to sit down with us and discuss Sonic Adventure and his plans for the future. To quote Wayne in Wayne's World: "We're not worthy!"

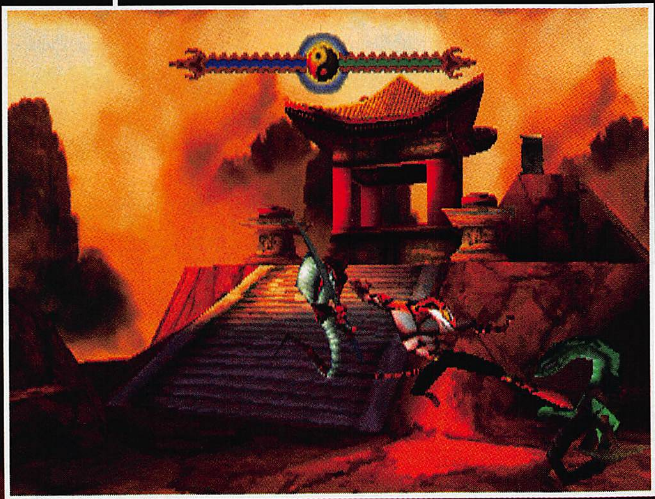


Yuji Naka's Game Portfolio

Release date	Titles	Platform	His role
Dec-84	Girls Garden	SG-1000	main programmer
15-Dec-85	Great Baseball	Sega Mark III	programmer
Mar-86	F-16 Fighting Falcon	Sega Mark III	main programmer
20-Jul-86	Hokuto no Ken	Sega Mark III	programmer
20-Sep-86	Spy vs. Spy	Sega Mark III	main programmer
21-Dec-86	Space Harrier	Sega Mark III	main programmer
30-Jun-87	Outrun	Sega Mark III	main programmer
20-Dec-87	Phantasy Star	Sega Mark III	main programmer
29-Oct-88	Super Thunderblade	Mega Drive	main programmer
21-Mar-89	Phantasy Star II	Mega Drive	main programmer
3-Aug-89	Dai Makai Mura	Mega Drive	main programmer
26-Jul-91	Sonic the Hedgehog	Mega Drive	main programmer
21-Nov-92	Sonic the Hedgehog 2	Mega Drive	main programmer
27-May-94	Sonic the Hedgehog 3	Mega Drive	main programmer
18-Oct-94	Sonic & Knuckles	Mega Drive	main programmer
5-Jul-96	NiGHTS	Sega Saturn	main programmer/producer
22-Nov-96	Christmas NiGHTS	Sega Saturn	producer
20-Jun-97	Sonic Jam	Sega Saturn	producer/programmer
4-Dec-97	Sonic R	Sega Saturn	producer
26-Feb-98	Burning Ranger	Sega Saturn	producer
23-Dec-98	Sonic Adventure	Dreamcast	producer


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Send them flyin' with over 100 character moves and authentic Kung Fu attacks like the Leopard Pounce and the Monkey Roll.

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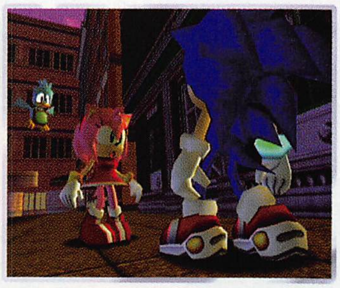
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After the blistering nine pages of *Sonic Adventure* featured in the March issue of *GameFan*, you'd have thought that there wasn't really anywhere left for us to go with it, right? Wrong. As it turns out, Sega is planning some massive overhauls to *Sonic Adventure* in time for the U.S. release. So along with a bevy of beautiful new screens (predominantly featuring the 'hog), I'll take a sec and show you around the various renovations being made to SA in the hopes of making it an even better experience for the non-import gamer (which will of course then be instantly re-packaged and re-sold in Japan as *Sonic Adventure International* or some other tomfoolery, <sigh>). This will be the last you see of *SA* in the pages of GameFan until the U.S. review copy blows into our offices, so without further ado…





Slam dancing to the beat of a different synthesizer

OK, people, try not to collectively wince as I deliver this news: *Sonic Adventure* is getting a new soundtrack for its U.S. release. Yep, apparently some of the higher-ups at Sega figure that us lowly Americans won't 'get' the cool, world-music-meets-'80s-cheese-metal tracks laid down for the import rev. Nope, we're getting *Sonic CD*'ed on this one. Not to be the harbinger of doom, but when you start emulating the management styles of your less-than-successful forebears, that can't be a positive thing. Adding insult to injury, the music is of the *Nine Inch Nails* variety so all of you folks out there who're heavily into the whole industrial sound thing, well, happy days. For the rest of us (most of *GameFan*) let's hope we don't see a repeat of the Sonic CD import/domestic reviews.



Naka meet Speilberg, Speilberg meet Naka







One of the harshest criticisms leveled at SA in general was the poor shape of the camera in certain areas of the game. On more than one occasion the camera angle would lead to a premature death, and much frustration for gamers worldwide. Well, Sega aims to rectify that small issue by recruiting upwards of 12 of Yuji Naka's Sonic Team cohorts to aid in the localization of this landmark title. Other items that will receive a bit of sprucing up:

- Clipping issues that led to Sonic and co. walking through walls, enemies, etc.
- Lips-synchs that more resemble an expertly dubbed anime than the latest edition of Kung-Fu theatre and/or the latest *Godzilla* flick.
- General tweaking of the engine to allow for faster frame-rates and less draw-in.

As a side note, even if they didn't tweak any of these things it would hardly matter: the game is utterly fantastic (just a reminder in case you missed the March issue).



Developer: Sega **Genre: Adventure** **Available: Sept. 9**

Sonic Adventure





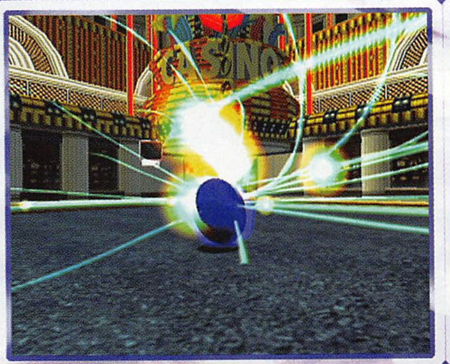


PHOTO FINISH

Sonic Adventure was one of the single most powerful gaming experiences ever. With some tweaking and tuning it only stands to improve and then even the jaded-to-death gamers out there won't have anything overt to complain about (of course, they'll then come back with "hedgehogs aren't blue... how stupid!"). Now, how 'bout some DC *NiGHTS*, Mr. Naka? **ECM**

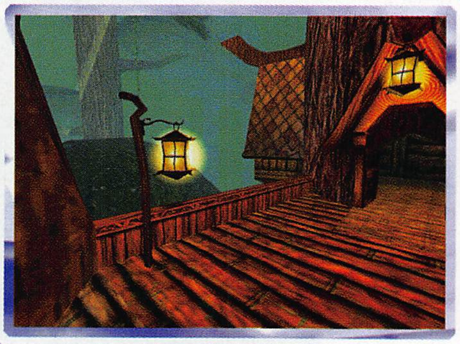
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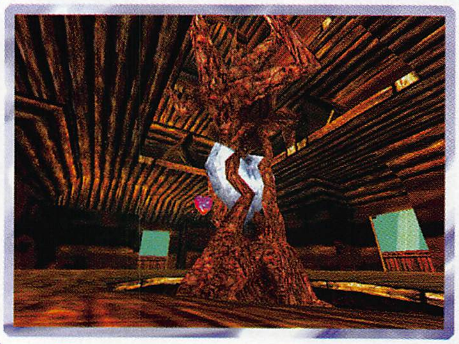


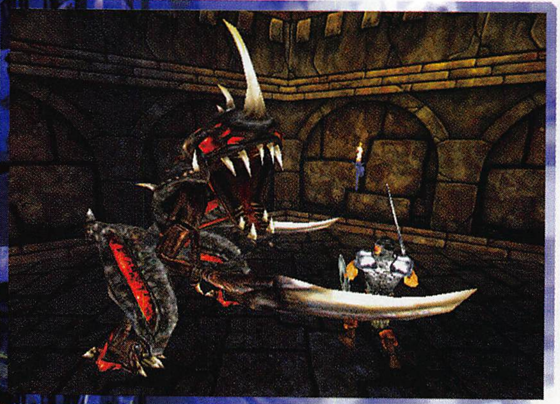












Hack-and-slash games haven't exactly been tearing up the charts in recent years. The genre that *Golden Axe* defined has seen a bit of a lull, and I'm wont to ask 'why?' It doesn't get much better than marching around with a giant axe or sword and cleaving some rather large, unsightly beast limb-from-horrific-limb. In fact, I've resorted to playing way too much *Nightmare Creatures* since I can't seem to get my fix anywhere else (hey Sega, where's my *Revenge of Death Adder*? Oh, over by that Saturn copy of *Bare Knuckle 4*...<urgh>)– it's a good game but it's getting a bit old... OK, really old. Ah, but what do we have here? Why it's Crave's first Dreamcast game, and wouldn't you know it, it's a hack-and-slash adventure game! *Blades of Vengeance* is the name and if that's anything to go by, well, we're in for some seriously bloody good times. This game is loosely based on the PC game *Die by the Sword* which Interplay published about a year ago, to mixed reviews. It seems the combat was a bit on the overly complex side and it required a bit more than most PC processors were willing to give it at the time.

LET'S GET READY TO CHOP!!!



However, Treyarch seems to have learned from those mistakes and has crafted a finely honed title this tim out. First off, the game doesn't have nearly the speed and frame rate issues that its PC forebear possessed all to amply. At this early stage in development, the game moves at a solid frame rate, and the graphics look simply amazing (how often do you think you'll hear that for the next six months?). Featuring a cast of mutants and monsters that would make a DM blush, *BoV* centers squarely on the action aspect of gameplay. The thing that most set apart *Die by the Sword* was the intricate combat system– using the mouse as you sword hand, a skilled player could dismantle a pack of kobolds in no timeflat. While this mechanic will likely be nixed for the DC release, plan on seeing something a little bit more than just hitting a button and swinging your chosen weapon (be it a battle axe or a broadsword). The game features two playable characters: the standard muscle-bound, Conan the Barbarian type and the lithe, lean femme fatale (who is equally as deadly). This game is quickly shaping up to be quite the DC powerhouse title. Large, vicious monsters and lots of edged weapons with which to deal death always adds up to a fun package in our book. Seeing as how Sega isn't going to give us what we want (*Golden Axe* in 3D!) it's up to Treyarch and Crave to fill that vold–something they've done remarkably well thus far. For now, though, I guess it's back to *Nightmare Creatures*...hurry Crave, I can't hold out much longer...<ack> **ECM**

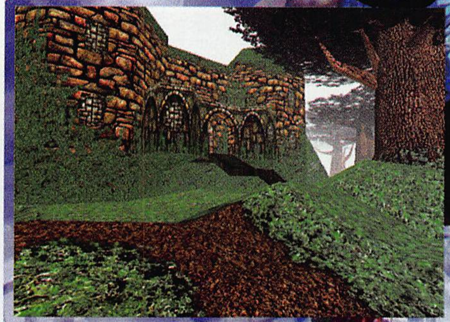




Developer: Treyarch Genre: Action-Adventure Available: 4th Quarter

BLADES OF VENGEANCE



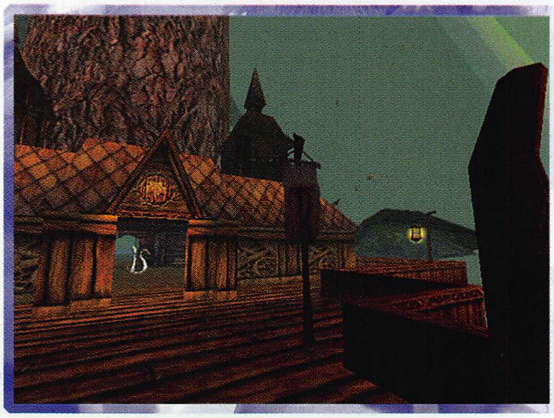



Blades of Vengeance Interview!

Chris Busse, Producer Treyarch LLC

GF: What was the inspiration behind *Blades of Vengeance*?

CB: After developing the VSIM sword fighting engine, which was featured in *Die By The Sword*, we wanted to take it to the next level. That's what drove us to the *Blades of Vengeance* project. We wanted to bring magic and sorcery into the mix, we wanted to provide richer, more expansive worlds; we basically wanted to do many more of the things that time and technology have stopped us from doing in the past.



GF: How would you best describe BoV?

CB: It is a mix of 3rd person action and exploration combined with the unique experience of close quarters hand-to-hand combat and powerful magics. It gives you some of the flavor of a traditional CRPG but without getting bogged down in the hours of spreadsheet management normally required. It is 3D-RPG/action/adventure/exploration.

GF: How long has the game been in development?

CB: Summer of '98 is when we started work on the engine and prototype levels. Full production began in Winter '98.

GF: What games have you worked on before?

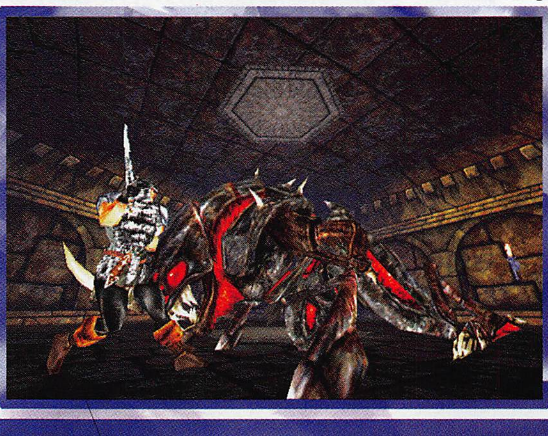


CB: As a company: *Die By The Sword* (PC), *Limb From Limb* (expansion for DBTS) (PC), *Nagano Olympic Hockey* (N64), and *Triple Play 2000* (N64). Personally: *Die By The Sword* (PC), and *Limb From Limb* (expansion for DBTS) (PC).

GF: How has the Dreamcast hardware been to work on?

CB: Support has been mixed. Sega has been fantastic in supporting all the developers, especially us. We have been pushing the envelope on the development side for the Dreamcast, and Sega has been there every step of the way as best they could.

Special thanks to Jay "As Fast As The Law Will Allow" Boor for arranging this last minute interview.




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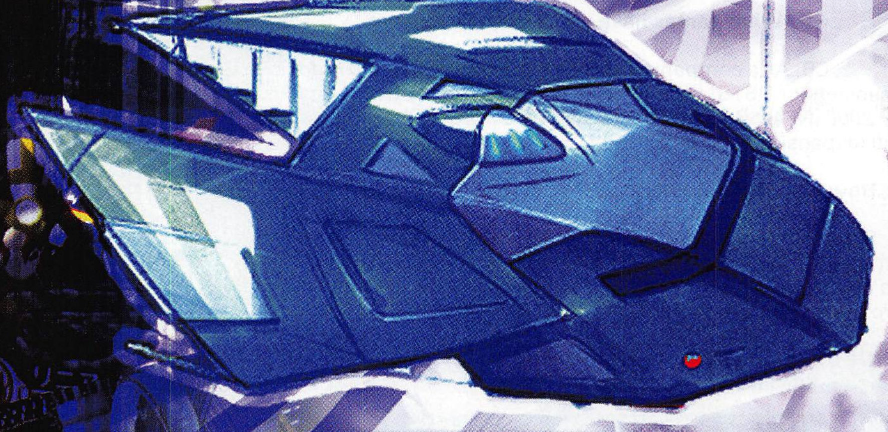
BEAM ME UP, INTERPLAY...

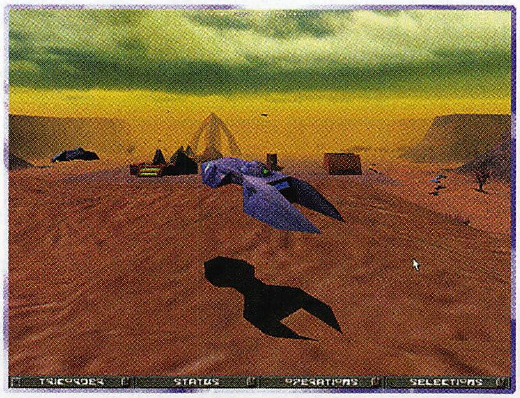
One of the most solid partnerships, in video gaming, is that between Paramount and Interplay. I am, of course, speaking of the lucrative Star Trek license which has managed to spawn several excellent titles (unlike another "star" license we all know and love) and generate oodles (yes oodles) of money for the two companies. The most recent is Star Trek New Worlds, a Real Time Strategy extravaganza that puts the player in the role of colonist.

This game won't exactly be going where no man has gone before, but the addition of the Trek license certainly will make heads turn. What makes this particular Star Trek game unique is the fact that it will be the first to grace the Dreamcast, as well as the first Trek game to explore worlds not already seen in the Trek universe. What does this mean? It means you'll see new races, fresh storylines and the most incredible graphics on the home console.

A new world is uncovered by the Romulans and now there is a mad rush to be the first to colonize. Choose from one of three faction: Federation, Romulan and Klingon. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses as well as dispositions and technologies. While the humans are there to explore and discover, the Klingons take a more aggressive stance, ready to go to blows if you infringe on their territory. As in all RTS titles, you'll be researching new technology, setting up perimeter defenses, and expanding your sphere of influence as far as your military might will let you. Many new weapons will be available in New Worlds, including such

GameFan Exclusive!

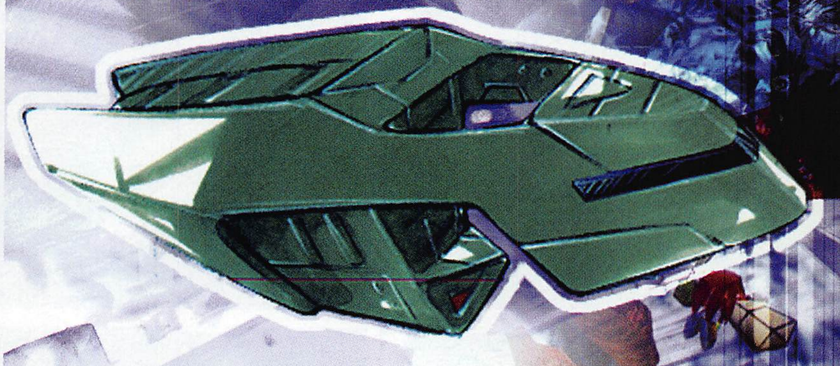




Developer: Interplay **Genre: RTS** **Available: 4th Quarter**

Star Trek New Worlds





vehicles of destruction as disruptor tanks, and Photon artillery launchers.

The new race aforementioned are travellers from the Alpha Quadrant's past, keyholders to some terrifying (of course) revelations about the Neutral Zone and its Black Nebula.

How does it play, you ask? Pretty damn good. Both exploration and combat are exciting and the building and resource management, engrosse. Just think Command & Conquer with little Worfs and Rikers running around; good stuff.

Star Trek New Worlds, already a popular PC game, looks like a sure-fire winner, on DC. Interplay, who have been nothing less than anemic on other consoles, is positioning itself as a premiere developer for Sega's new machine. With any luck, we'll see a Baldur's Gate and King Pin, shortly.



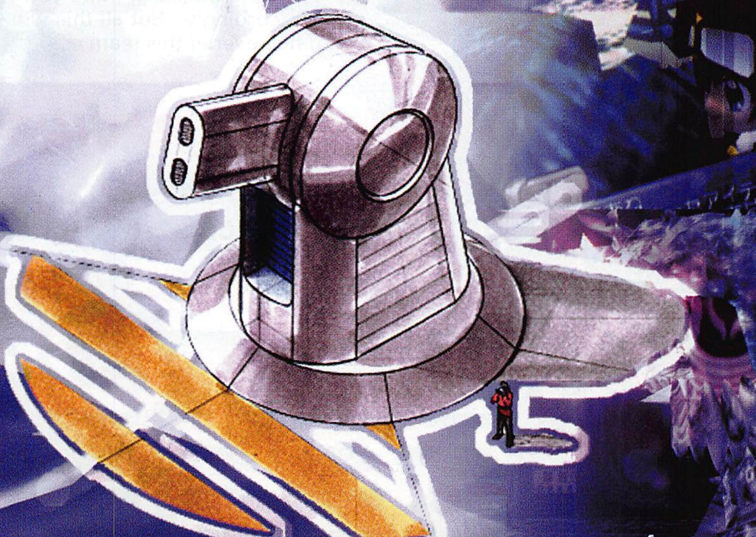
Warp factor Eight... Engage!





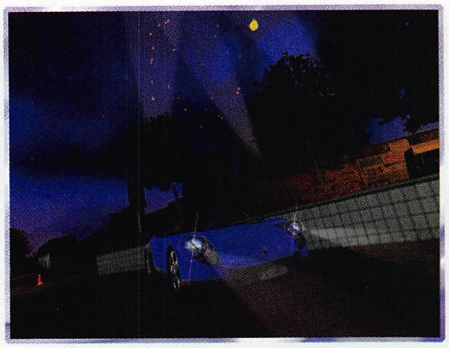






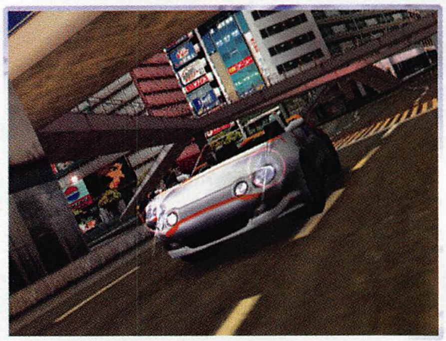
















You may not have heard much about UK-based Bizarre Creations, but you're about to hear a whole lot more. The team that brought many an amazing Amiga game together for Psygnosis and the first two phenomenal Formula 1 games on PlayStation (also by Psygnosis) has now landed squarely on Planet Sega. Tapped as one of the first members of Sega's version of the "Dream Team," Bizarre has been hard at work on two Dreamcast utterly amazing creations: *Furballs*, a wacky first person shooter, and *Metropolis Street Racer*, the unbelievable game you see before you. Dare I even say *Super GT/Daytona 2* killer? Whoops, I just did! What makes *Metro* so utterly incredible? Let's see, where do I start...? How 'bout the absolutely unbelievable graphics (as good a place as any, eh?)? While other developers moan about the DC's apparent lack of polygon-pushing power (no really, they're out there) BC has seen fit to craft one of the single most visually awe-inspiring events in gaming history. Had you seen this game running in your nearby arcade, you wouldn't hesitate to feed it large denomination bills just for the chance to tear your way around *Metro's* incredibly modeled, 'based on real-life' cities. Each city was modeled from thousands of photos taken from real cities – six square miles worth! Better yet, are the vehicles themselves. The cars are modeled with upwards of 1600 polygons each (oy!) and are derived from a variety of manufacturers: Honda, Mercedes, and Alfa Romeo to name a few. The weather also plays a role with wind, rain, snow, and even fog from time-to-time (real fog, mind you – not the invisible wall of doom variety) affecting conditions accordingly. But all this would be for naught if the game didn't play well. Have no fear, however: if this team can accurately replicate the complexities of Formula 1 racing on the



PEDAL TO THE METAL RACING AS IT'S MEANT TO BE!!!

Developer: Bizarre Creations Genre: Racing Available: 4th Quart.

metropolis street racer

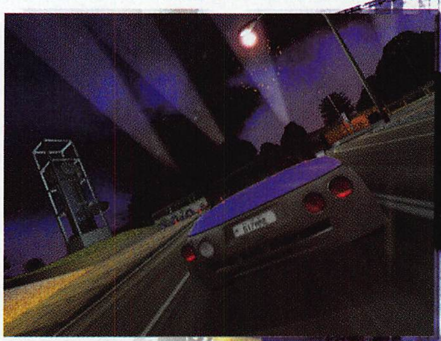


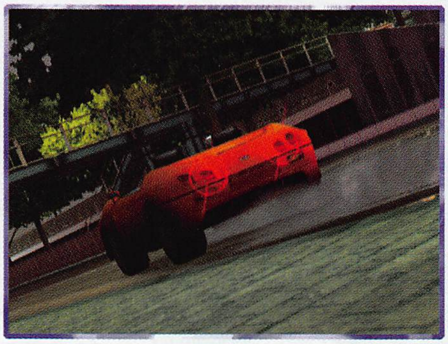
As a brief example, here are a game shot and a real-world shot of Shibuya City in Japan. Note that unless you're among the painfully, ass-smackingly jaded gamers, you'd have to attest that the engine that's powering this beast of a game is simply unbelievable. Effortlessly chucking around huge numbers of polys while preparing you dinner, this is a man's racing game!



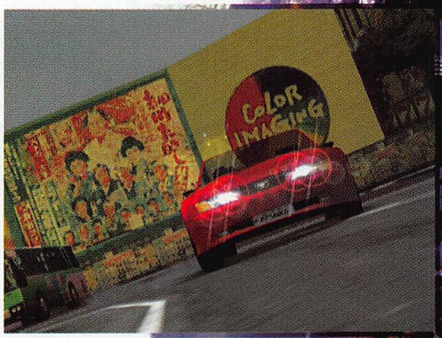








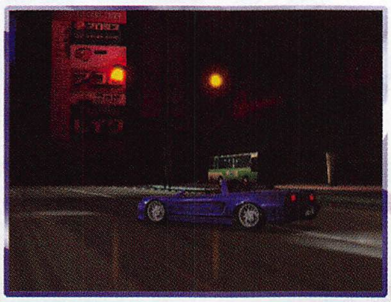




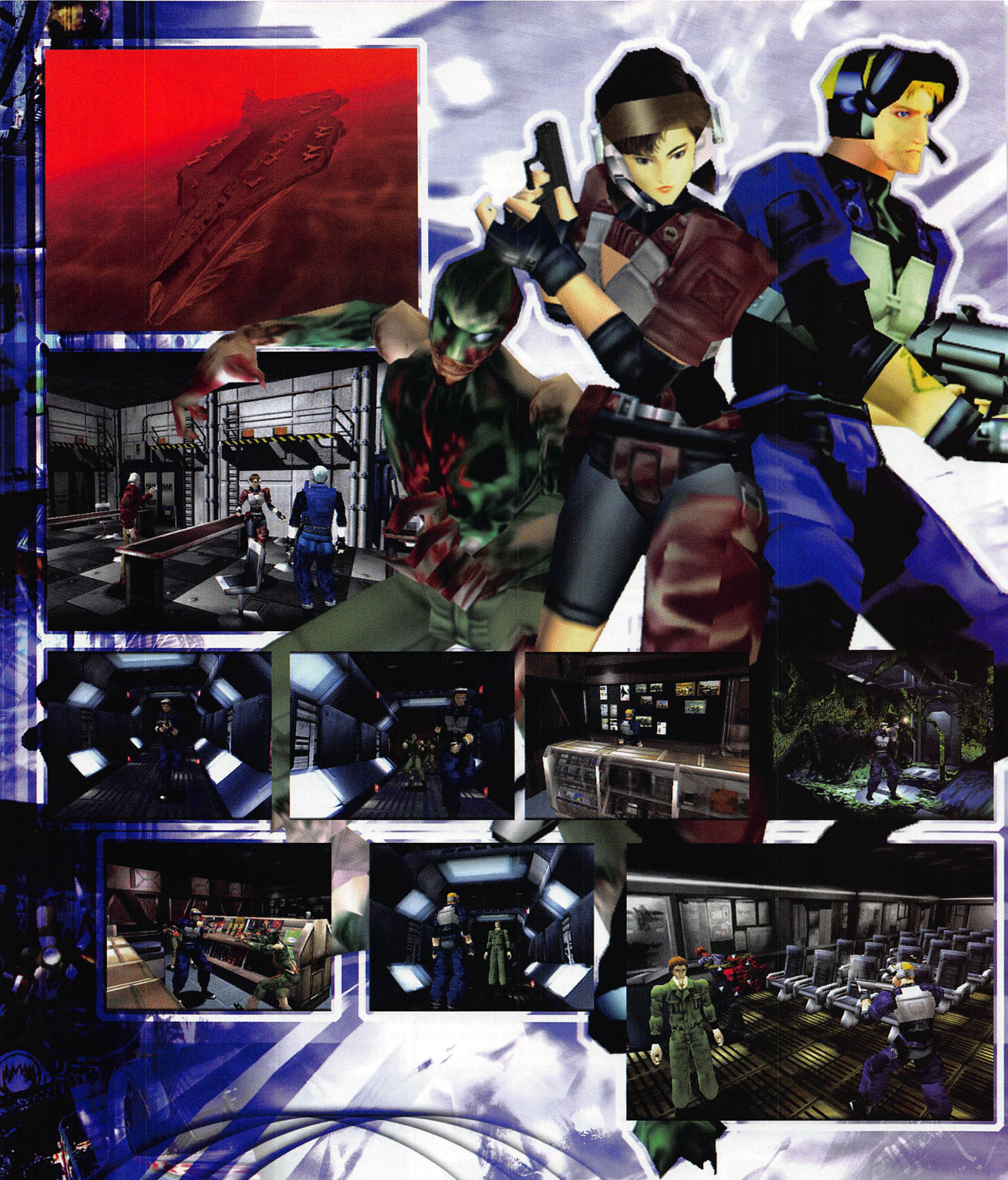
GENTLEMEN...START YOUR DREAMCASTS!!!

modest hardware the PlayStation provides, we have little fear that the final product won't play like a dream (if it doesn't, you have my word that I will administer a savage beating to every member of the team – minus, maybe, Sarah as she's ever-so-helpful). Modes included in the game feature the standard 'race to win' and 'time attack' modes that have characterized every racing game since the dawn of the genre. New to *Metro*, though, is a story mode of sorts, and this is presumably where you would go to unlock the bevy of hidden cars to go along with the 20+ that are immediately available (oh yes, there's more!). One nice little addition is the ability to customize the cars' license plates (ah, the ECM Mobile). The unfathomable part of all of this is that, just six months ago, I wouldn't have given a European developer (outside of Rare or DMA) the time of day if they begged me... now they're hard-pressed to keep me and the rest of GF crew at bay ('specially Big Bubba...he's an ornery one, he is). Needless to say, this should easily be one of the reasons you go and buy a Dreamcast the day it comes out (if you're in Europe, you get it Day One). Now, if only E3 would just get here a little more quickly... the wait just got ever-so much more difficult, didn't it? **ECM**







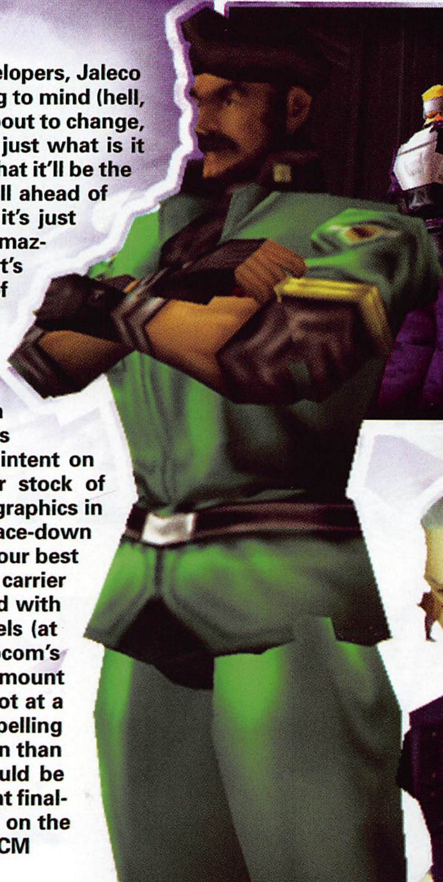


Developer: Jaleco **Genre: Adventure** **Available: 4th Quart.**

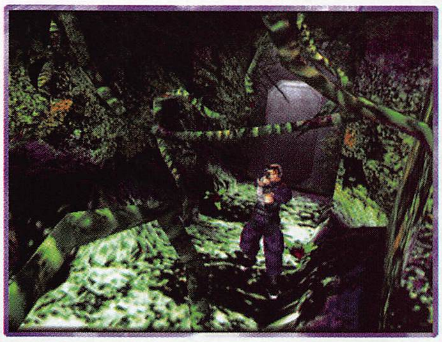
Carrier

When you think big-time, heavy-duty console developers, Jaleco probably isn't one of the first companies to spring to mind (hell, they're probably not in the first fifty). That's all about to change, however, with the introduction of Jaleco's *Carrier*. And just what is it that makes *Carrier* so special? Well, perhaps it's the fact that it'll be the first "survival horror" game to grace the Dreamcast (well ahead of Capcom's zombie-fest) — nah, it's not that. Or maybe it's just that it looks so damn amazing (nah, all DC games look amazing). Nope, it probably simply boils down to the fact that it's going to be an amazing game from the unlikeliest of places. *Carrier* has several things going for it: while the story does tend to rip *RE* a bit (zombies mutated by some insidious biological agent), it features its share of originality. Featuring an intrepid crew out to stop a naval carrier from returning to port with a cargo of deadly experiments gone awry that turns all those infected into photosynthetic mutants intent on cleaning out the world's nurseries of their stock of Miracle-Gro (the horror, the horror!). The graphics in this game are simply stunning. You'll face-down legion after legion of mutated flora, and do your best to make sure the 'carriers' never leave the carrier (best case, they leave as mulch). Everything is presented with typical Dreamcast panache, although the character models (at least at this stage) are not quite on par with Capcom's *Codename: Veronica* (they also don't feature the same amount of slowdown, either). Simply put: this is Jaleco's first shot at a bona fide worldwide hit. If the story remains compelling enough (hopefully with more scares and less all-out action than *RE2*) this could be the game that finally puts them on the map. –ECM





















Soul Calibur





While a large number of the fighting game public is desperate for a go at *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, I'm willing to bet that it would pale in comparison if everybody knew what was coming their way shortly after the Dreamcast's arrival: Namco's *Soul Calibur.* While Namco's latest arcade-offering met with limited success on its initial run, it probably isn't much of a leap to say that this is one of the single most important DC games Sega has in its immediate future. And it's important for one major reason: it's Namco's first Sega-console game since the ill-fated *Cyber Sled* on Saturn. Nope, Sega needs this game to sell, and sell big. Not that I'd be too frightened of that, seeing as how the game is perhaps the best-looking title set to hit the system in the early going (it's no wonder Namco is targeting the game to sell two million copies in Japan... though that may be a bit of wishful thinking). Beyond the blazing arcade-crushing graphics, this game also sports one of the best soundtracks of any game in recent memory. But perhaps the single biggest upgrade from the venerable arcade slice 'em up will be the inclusion of all new CG movies that may re-define console cut-scenes for the foreseeable future (going head-to-head with *Shen Mue's* real-time sequences). Now that Namco has *Soul Calibur* firmly in its sheath, perhaps it's time to talk about an all-new version of *Ridge Racer.* Or better yet, *Klonoa*! Besides, when it comes right down to it, what game is a better fit for a console originally dubbed 'Katana'? –ECM

SoulCalibur







Developer: Namco **Genre: Fighting** **Available: 4th Quart.**







Based on Midway's arcade mega-hit, *Hydro Thunder* is churning water to a Dreamcast near you come launch day. Originally debuting on Midway's custom Diego hardware (comprised of a Voodoo graphics card, a Celeron PC processor, and some hardware tweaks specifically designed to run this game), *HT* is shaping up to be a formidable opponent afloat the dangerous Dreamcast waters this fall. Now I've never been much of a fan of Midway/Atari Games' legion of *SF Rush*-inspired racing games, but this is a nice change of pace from the same tired engine we've all been playing for years (and how can it be that it's more popular than *Daytona 2*... argh). The only problem with the big-buck coin-op was that the frame-rate tended to never quite hit the 30fps mark. While early word is good on the DC rev, the producer of the game has gone on record as saying that he prefers the visuals in the coin-op to the console version. Here's to hoping that he's just really partial to the hardware he helped design (Diego) and that the frame-rate will be improved prior to its release, simply due to the fact that just about every other DC game in development features blazing speed. However, there's still some time left in its development cycle so here's hoping... for fans of the arcade game (and there are a lot of them) you'll be well taken care of. -ECM







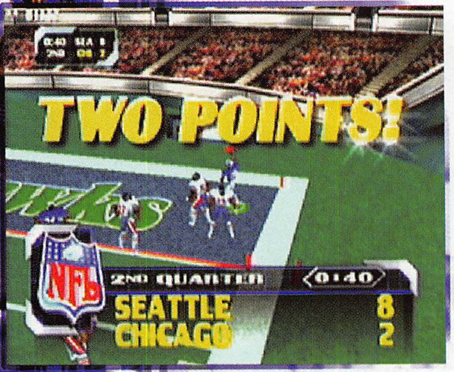






Developer: Midway | **Genre: Racing** | **Available: Sept. 9th**

hydro thunder

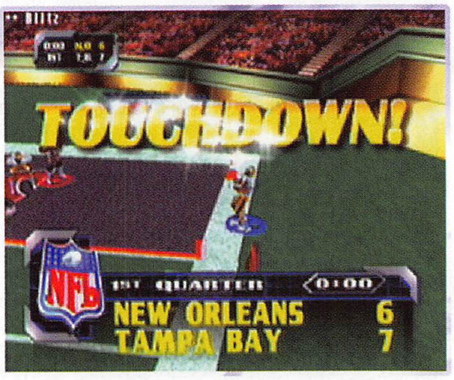








Generally speaking, avid gamers (look! I didn't say 'hard-core'... doh) are not the biggest fans of sports games; actually, it's probably more likely that slugs are bigger fans of salt. However, there's still a nice tidy niche that caters to the more blood-thirsty, less athletically-inclined legion of couch potatoes out there. Games like *NBA Jam* and *Hit the Ice* proved that even the sports-illiterate (probably about 90% of *GF's* readership) game fan can relate to titles like these. And with the introduction of Dreamcast and its two mega-hot sports titles coming down the line, Midway has seen fit to do a little chop-block and introduce *Blitz 2000* to the eager masses (on launch day, no less) that would shun a 'regular' sports game with all the fervor of shirtless, beer-swilling Packers fan in sub-zero weather, <shudder>. All the wicked, bone-crushing action of the arcade rev has made it over perfectly to the DC. In fact, it would appear from early footage that we've been privy to, that the actual image quality of the game is superior to the arcade version (gee, that'll be tough getting used to). The frame-rate is intact, and as is becoming the norm for DC games, it runs at a solid 60 without a hint of slowdown or frame drop. What's more, this should only be the start, with Midway already planning to bring the latest in the series that spawned from the venerable king of the non-sports sports game, *NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC* (the descendant of the original *NBA Jam* games), to Dreamcast late this year. Check back next issue for a more in-depth look at *Blitz 2000* and realize that being a sports-pariah isn't always a bad thing. –ECM













Developer: Midway **Genre: Sports** **Available: Sept. 9th**

blitz 2000



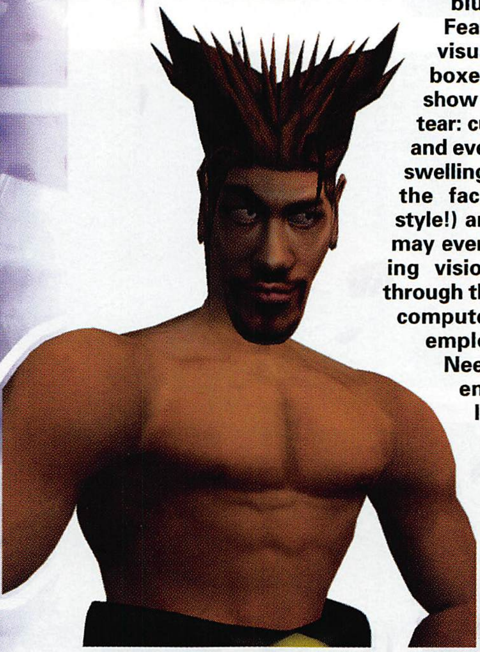








Let's start with a brief list of boxing games that were actually fun: *Ring King* (NES and arcade), *Punch Out* (NES and arcade), *Legends of the Ring* (Genesis and SNES), and of course, *Super Punch Out* (SNES). Since these kings of the ring reached legendary status back in the day (punching out all their feeble competition), it's been a bit of dry spell for the boxing enthusiast. Obviously with the introduction and rampant spread of more over-the-top fighting contests (*Street Fighter II* and all its legitimate and illegitimate offspring), boxing games have generally taken a backseat to their more imaginative kin (though any of the boxers from *Super Punch Out* would probably fit in just fine in any number of fighting games). That all stands to change with the introduction of Midway's *Ready 2 Rumble*, which is currently destined for PS, N64, and naturally, Dreamcast. While the characters are somewhere between 'reality' and *Super Punch Out* ("Peanuts, popcorn, stereotypes, beer!"), the action is about as realistic as boxing games have gotten, through their black and blue history. Featuring stunning visuals, replete with boxers that actually show signs of wear and tear: cuts, bruises, fatigue and even differing levels of swelling. Get punched in the face enough (Posty-style!) and the boxers' eyes may even swell shut, affecting vision (see the world through the eyes of a veteran computer data entry employee for free!). Needless to say, the entire staff breathlessly awaits the chance to get some solid time with this one. Oh, and don't forget, it costs you ten cents every time you say the title... –ECM



Developer: MIdway | **Genre: Fighting** | **Available: Sept. 9th**

ready 2 rumble






The 32-bit generation of consoles (including the N64) saw an explosion of all manner of games that required some sort of 'board' to ride: snowboards, hoverboards, skateboards, I'm getting bored...the whole genre needs a swift kick in the hind quartes and Trick Style/Velocity (they still haven't decided what to call it) is set to deliver a nasty blow. Take all the best aspects of a legion of 'Do the Dew'-style Gen X boardin' games, add a futuristic twist, subtract any elements that even remotely resemble Streak (hey, bad things happen to good developers) and voila, you might get something like this. Blistering speeds are what make TS so damn compelling (though more and more it seems like all DC games will feature "blistering speed" and "intense frame rates"). The hope is to combine that speed with some creative stunts and intuitive gameplay. Whether or not the game will have this control and depth is yet to be seen. This early version gives me hope, though, which is saying a lot because there is no genre I want to see die faster than boarding, hover or otherwise. Lord, it seems like every Dreamcast game I look at will be a winner. I wonder if my wallet will be able to handle it when launch date hits... **EN**



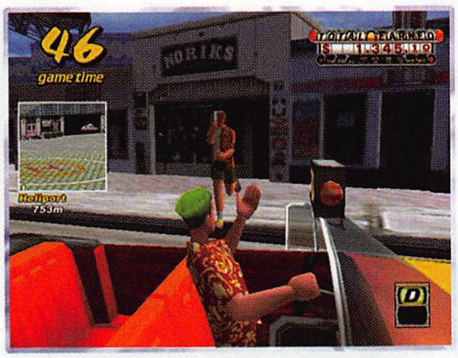


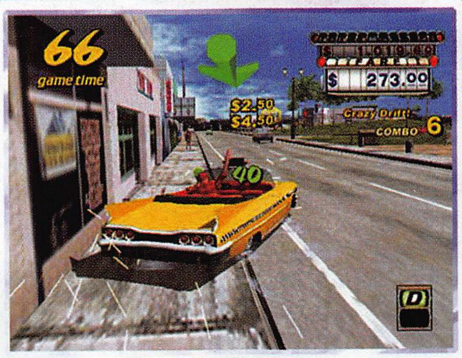


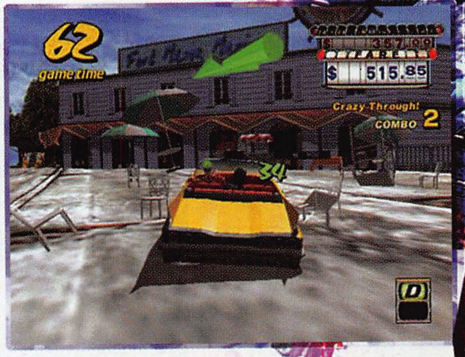


Developer: Criterion Studios Genre: Racing Available: 4th Quarter

trick style



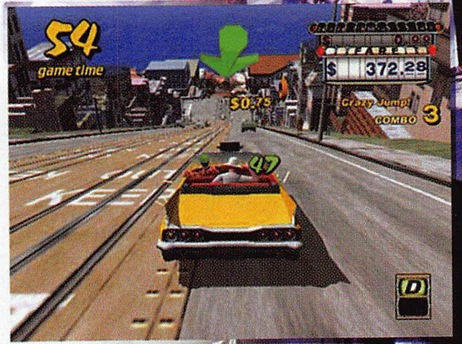














I f there's one thing Sega always gets right, it's arcade games. Alas, once a game comes home it tends to lose a lot in the transition due to the quick fix nature of the arcade business (hey, when a game is only meant to last for 10-15 mintues tops...). In Crazy Taxi, the goal is to pick of various passengers and deliver them to a number of hot-spots across a fictitious city replete with a legion of sponsors including KFC, Pizza Hut, Fila, and the Gap to name a few (yeah, it's rampant comsumerism, but it's kinda' cool). Along the way, you'll have to dodge all manner of traffic including the requisite bad drivers (Eggo can relate really well to these guys), as well as hit ramps and various other 'obstacles' that enhnace the experience of being an actual NYC cab driver (except that these drivers speak solid English– no mean feat). As a side note, this game hasn't been officially announced of yet, but let me just assure you that if there's anything you can count on in life it's that every Naomi game will come home (that and a little PR bird sang me a little song entitled Crazy Taxi Dreamcast). **ECM**

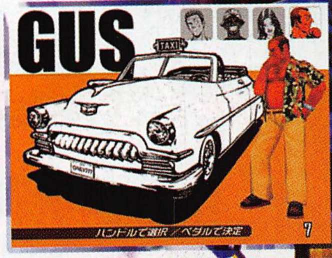








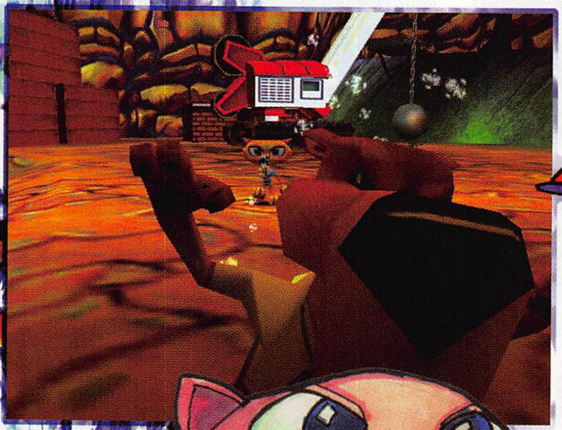




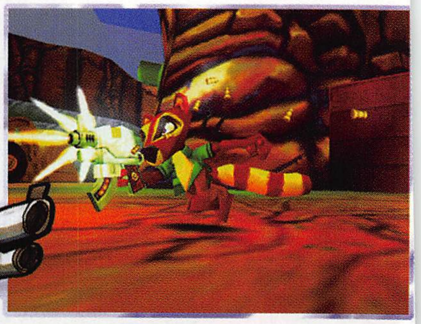
Developer: Sega | **Genre: Taxi Driving** | **Available: TBA**

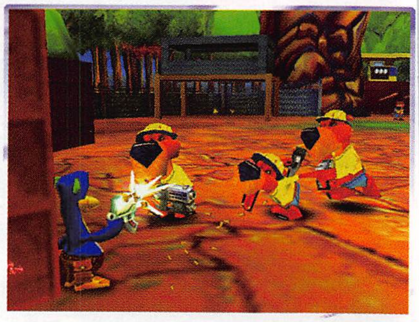
crazy taxi





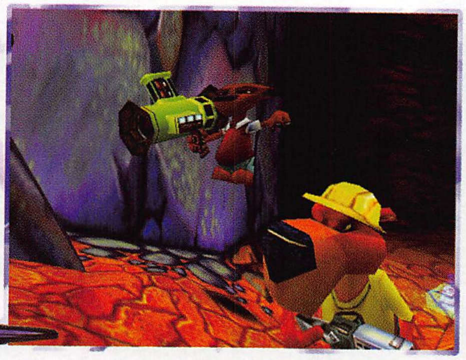






Bizzare Creations describes *Furballs* as the first ever multi-character 3D action shooter puzzle adventure game...or something like that. Whatever it is, it's certainly a force with which to be reckoned. Even at this very early stage the game looks stunning — somewhat akin to Rare's *Jet Force Gemini*, but better. By utilizing the six playable characters: Bungalow the Kangaroo, Chang the Firefox (Chinese Panda), Juliette the Cat, Rico the Rockhopper Penguin, Roofus the Dog and Tweak the, uh, Dragon to complete each level in the game, you have an unparalleled level of playability. Each wacky character has his or her own unique ability to help them traverse the game's massive 3D environs. In order to beat the game you'll have to use each character in **every** level by 'teleporting' characters in as you need them. The best news, however, may be the use of split-screen and network gameplay (which the PC version already has, and will hopefully carry over to the DC rev). Needless to say, we're all in a twist waiting for our crack at one of the DC's more promising original titles. Suffice it to say, Bizarre Creations is a developer to watch (they're gonna make the larger dev houses look quite foolish) and we over-anxiously await the latest on this hot title! **ECM**

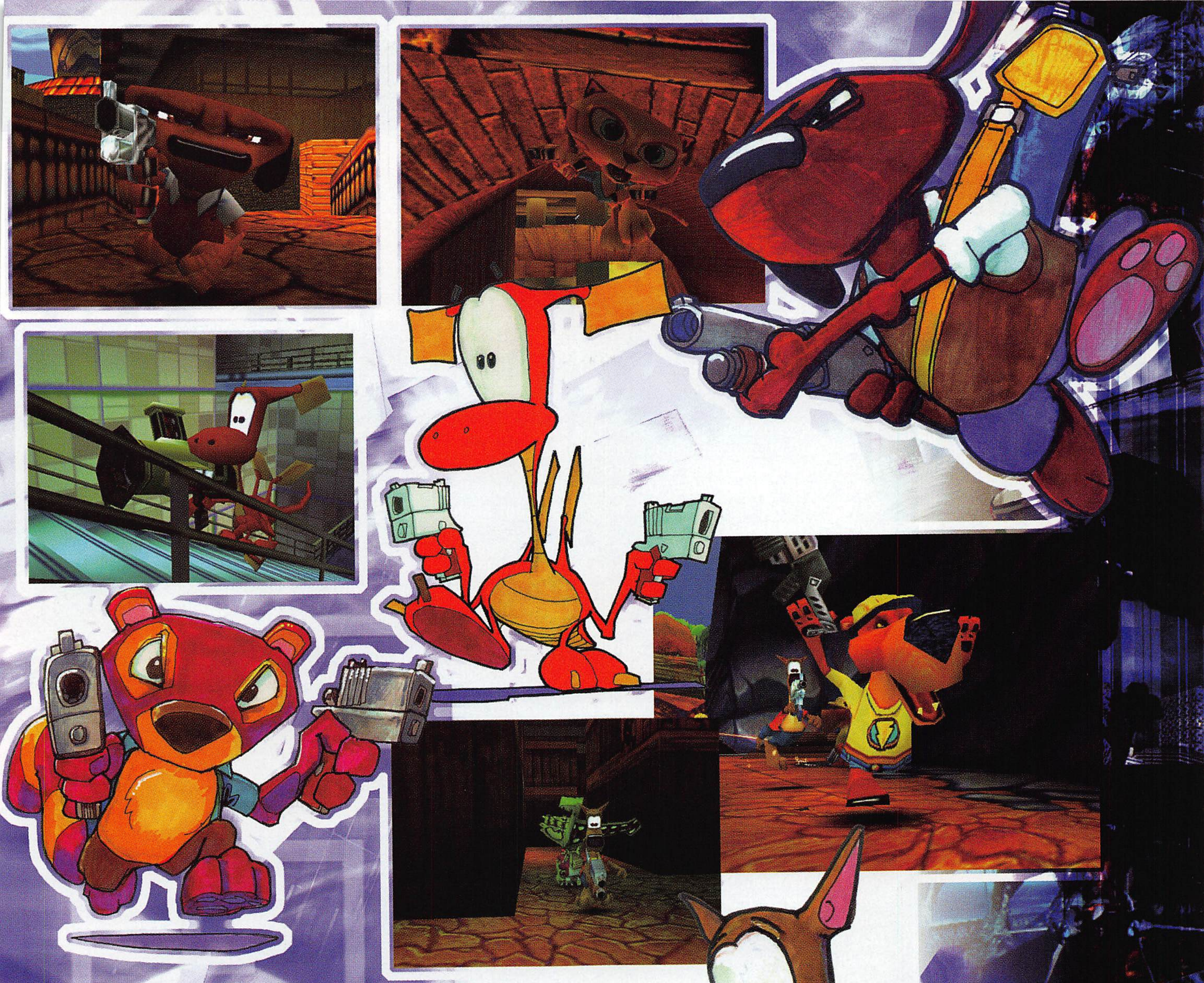






Developer: Bizarre Creations **Genre: Action Adventure** **Available: 2000**

Furballs



5 Questions with Sarah Dixon, PR Super Star, Bizarre Creations
(a little developer who the American's don't know yet, but you will!)

GF: How long has *Furballs* been in development?
SD: It's been in development for just over a year. The team were working on a project called Drive-By for PlayStation, but this gradually got re-thought and ended up as *Furballs*!!

GF: What kind of multi-player options does *Furballs* feature?
SD: So far, we have a split screen mode, and a networked mode on the PC version, and could incorporate both into the Dreamcast version. The network mode is called a 'Fluffmatch' as of course, there's no blood when you shoot cute animals, only fluff ;-)

GF: When do we get it?!
SD: Ooooh, well, that'll depend on when we find a publisher. We've just started looking for one — when we sign it up, we'll let you know what the plans for release are. We're hoping to finish for it for the first part of next year, but if that changes, we'll let you know!

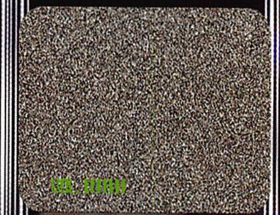
GF: Where do we go for more info?
SD: (aaah, got you there ;-) Yes, we do have a website — two, even! The company one is at www.bizarrecreations.com and the game has its own site at www.furballs.com

And last (but certainly not least):

GF: What makes a better pet: cats or dogs, and why?
SD: For this question, I've handed over to the Designer of the *Furballs*, Jeff Lewis. He says that it's definitely dogs, as they can hold a machine gun better!



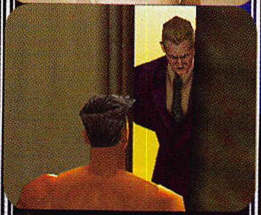






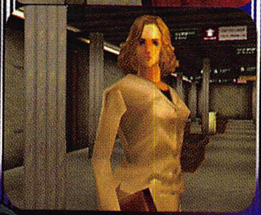






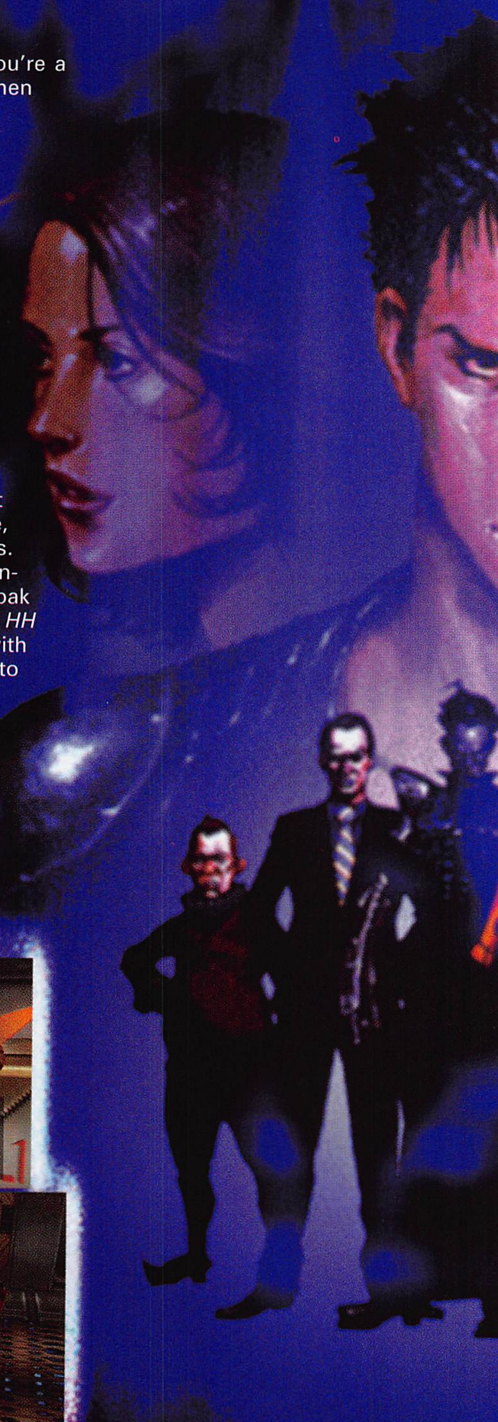








HYBRID



I'm sure you've all read reviews of *Turok 2*. Well, if you're a busy person and don't have time to read a full review, then conjure up memories of all those *Turok 2* reviews you read, and substitute "*Hybrid Heaven*" for "*Turok 2.*" But for those who appreciate the time I've spent slaving over *HH*, read on...

WASHINGTON D.C., December 20th 2000 — Christmas carols fill the air, snow is falling, and there's trouble in the nation's capital. We pick up the story as Johnny secretly talks with a mysterious stranger. They go over plans to 'replace' the President, and the operative leaves with the parting words: "Remember to act like a human when you're Overground." Later, Johnny meets up with a Mr. Diaz, who suddenly pulls a gun and murders our short-lived acquaintance. Flipping over the alien guards who restrain him, Diaz flees for his life. You pick up the action as Diaz: confused, alone, and in the midst of an alien conspiracy.

Now let's get back to that *Turok 2* comparison. Most reviews harped on the same problems: choppy frame-rate, slowdown, and long distances between save points. Unfortunately, *Hybrid Heaven* suffers from the same downfalls as Iguana's favorite son, and that's with the RAM pak enabled. Without the little red and black box, you can play *HH* only in low resolution and the frame-rate is smooth, with minor slowdown. Throw in the RAM pak, and the option to play in high res appears. Unfortunately, standard high-res butchers the frame-rate, to the point of *Turok 2* when everything starts exploding. There is the letterboxed high-res mode, but I prefer my movies letterboxed, not my video games. Besides, you didn't shell out the cash for the RAM pak to play games in low res, right?

And then there's the save points — so few and far between. The game is not difficult, but when you go an hour without saving and then run into a boss, you'll question what the developers were thinking. Plus, when you want to shut the game off, 'waiting' for the next save is about as excruciating as waiting for the newest *GameFan*.







 EGGO: It's a bird... it's a plane... it's a WRESTLING game? | Developer - Konami Computer Ent. Osaka (KCEO) | Publisher - Konami | 1 Player | Available Now | Viewpoint Score :85

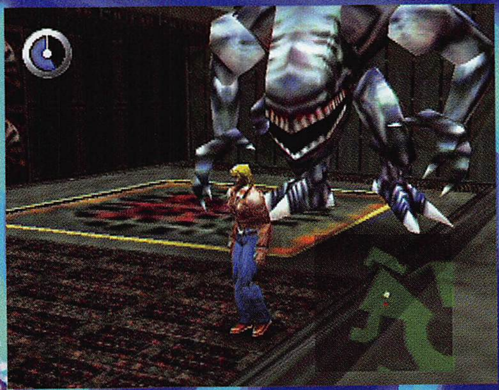
HEAVEN



On a more positive note, *Hybrid Heaven* has some of the best-sounding music on the fun machine (I know, that argument holds about as much water as being "The best fighting game on N64!"). Super Teeter went a little overboard when he called it the best cartridge music ever (to me, that distinction sadly lies in the 16-bit era), and *Turok 2* still owns the N64 musical crown.

But enough with this talk of *T2*. It's time for a subject near and dear to Shidoshi and Hi-Fi's hearts — wrestling. That's right, down and dirty, eye-gouging, elbow dropping, body slammin' wrasslin'. It sounds fruity, but *Hybrid Heaven's* gameplay is a hybrid mixture of *Tomb Raider* and *WWF Warzone*. The more fun aspect is the wrestling, so I'll tackle that first.

HH adds an interesting armtwist to the action/adventure formula with battles which are one-on-one deathmatches. From long distance, the fighting is like *Parasite Eve* or *Virtua Fighter* (scrambling around, jockeying for position); but as soon as you close the distance, throws and wrestling techniques come into play. Lock up with a guy, flip him over with a neck throw, then follow it up when he rises with his back turned. Can you smell what the Eggo's cookin'? It's a novel idea, and it's refreshing to see new ideas on this





system. Anyway, I always found myself looking forward to the next chance to educate some roody-poo, candy-ass alien who crossed the Eggo's path. Then, after a fight, RPG-like leveling up occurs as body parts gain strength, and your characteristics (stamina, defense, attack, speed, etc.) improve.

The other side to the gameplay is the standard flip-switching, door-finding, quasi-platforming/puzzle *Tomb Raider* fare. Nothing wrong with this, since I'm a big fan of noodle usin'. At least Konami's not trying to sell their game with silicon.

What I can't figure out is what they're doing with the story. It starts out ambitious: reeking of aliens, conspiracy, betrayal, love, and murder. Then you get to the game, which seems to have very little to do with that deep plot. Then a few cut scenes appear out of the blue, and then you're back in *Tomb Raider* mode. Let's just say that the puzzles won't be the only thing that'll leave you scratching your head.

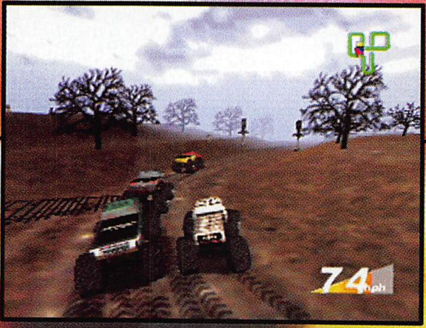
So what's the verdict? With gameplay that's a mix of *TR* and *WWF*, epic story, good music, and near-forgivable flaws along the lines of *T2*, *HH* is a must-play for N64 owners. But I'd advise renting before buying, because knowing your role and shutting your mouth won't be for everyone. E

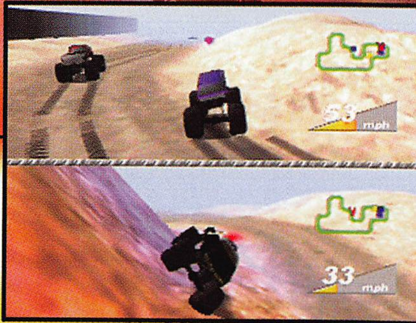




MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 64







Rockstar Games is ready and just itching to break into the fast-paced and highly lucrative world of Monster Truck games for the N64... oh wait, there AREN'T any Monster Truck Racing games for the N64! So they're trendsetters... big deal! Although nearly 70% complete, what we've seen so far only assures us that *Monster Truck Madness* will be THE monster truck game to beat! Seriously!

Although at first it looks like a typical racer with cars replaced by trucks, play it for a bit and you'll see there's so much more. There's normal racing, but it's not the main focus. Instead, checkpoints are littered across the VERY large playfields (plus there are secrets everywhere... get ready to do some explorin'!) and your job as a would-be trucker is to hit 'em all. Sounds simple, right? Well it would be, if only there weren't others doing the same thing!

One thing I noticed in the preview was that before racing, you can actually choose what kind of lighting conditions you want. There's day (nice 'n bright), evening (dusk), night (pretty dark), pitch black (impossible to play in!), and most shocking of all — fog. Y'know, I've played my share of N64 games, and how ironic is it when I see fog become an OPTION! It's so funny... that I'll let it go.

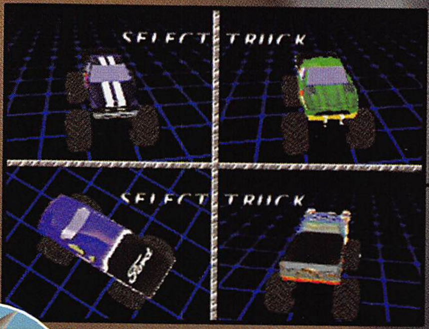
But the real fun isn't the single player game... this IS a N64 game after all, so fire up the multiplayer! There's the typical 4-player racing, but skip that and get ready to go head-to-head in the free-for-all... You can even be a cop monster truck! Sure it looks ridiculous, but it's different! Heck, there's even a wacky soccer mode. Yeah, that's right... you get to play soccer with giant, mutant trucks. I know, I know... this game was programmed in England, after all (I simply luv the football!)

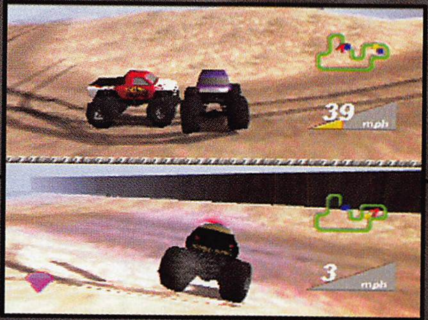
...you get to play soccer with giant, mutant trucks.

So far, so good! Even though I'm not from the South (thank goodness, because my cousins just aren't attractive enough!), nor do I attend the many rallys (Sunday! Sunday! Sunday!)... still, I'm growing to like these wacky 'alternative' racers. Who knows, maybe next time one of those freakshows comes to town, I'll buy a ticket. Then again... **ST**













SUPER TEETER: OLD-FASHIONED SOUTHERN TRUCK PLAY | DEVELOPER - EDGE OF REALITY | PUBLISHER - ROCKSTAR GAMES | 1-4 PLAYERS | AVAILABLE SUMMER



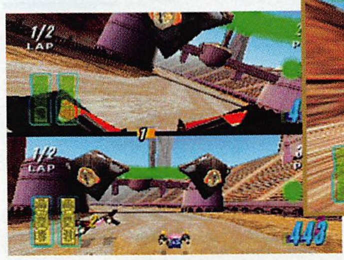
STAR WARS® EPISODE I™ RACER™











"You must unlearn what you have learned" — a GOOD Star Wars game?!

Last month, ECM wrapped up his *Episode I: Racer* preview by saying, "If LucasArts can fix the frame-rate by the time the game ships, then they'll have a winner on their hands." Back then, I assumed that the problem wouldn't be fixed, and that they would release the game and let it sell based on the *Star Wars* license. After all, when was the last time a *Star Wars* game (especially on console) was good? Well, much to my surprise, come review time, the frame-rate **has** been fixed in multi-player, and it now runs at a constant, gear-grinding pace with no slowdown. Hard to believe, I know, but it's safe to say Nintendo has a winner on their hands. They're so confident, in fact, that *Racer* will be the first Nintendo game to come packaged with the system (at $149).

"...in a galaxy far, far away." — the Environments

It runs on the same engine, but *EI:R* looks nothing like *F-Zero X*. The worlds you race on really feel like they're alien. The locales vary from Tatooine to Mon Gaza to Andro Prime. Just take a look at the screenshots, and you'll see that these are no ordinary backgrounds. The pod racers themselves are also incredibly unique — from their characters down to the design of their vehicles. There's even the option to visit the hangar where repair droids maintain and upgrade your parts. There, you can move the camera around and view the pod from any angle you choose.

"It'll be just like Beggar's Canyon back home" — the Racing

It sounds silly to say it, but *Episode I: Racer* may be **too** fast. That says a lot about a game when the biggest knock is that the engine moves too quickly, but such is the case with *EI:R*. Don't get me wrong, I like this game, but the sensation of speed it conveys is so paint-strippingly fast, that I'm sure casual gamers will frequently crash into the dusty canyon walls of Tatooine. Courses can go pretty long, lasting minutes at a time, with shortcuts for the adventurous. Also, there are certain sections where your racer will have to go sideways (rotating 90 degrees) to squeak through a narrow opening, like the Falcon in *Empire*.

"Indeed, you are powerful, as the Emperor has foreseen" — the Game

So with a blazing one-player race, a smooth two-player mode, and plenty of hidden tracks and characters, is *Episode I: Racer* worth a purchase? In the classic words of the Magic 8-Ball — "Most definitely." My only regret is that the dual controllers (one for each engine) for one-player idea didn't make it in the final (they probably ran out of time). Still, go buy it now. I'm sure the line for the game'll be shorter than the one for the movie. **E**







VIEWPOINT SCORE :91	DEVELOPER - LUCASARTS PUBLISHER - NINTENDO	1-2 PLAYERS AVAILABLE MAY 19TH	EGGO: TOO FAST... TOO FAST FOR LOVE



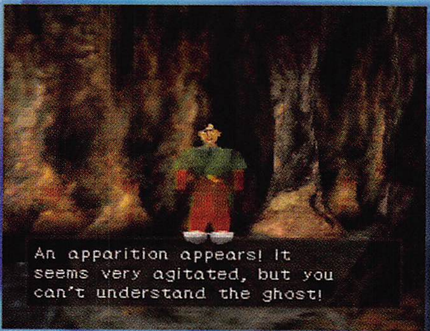




One mis-step can spell certain doom.

You can't keep a good Evil down. It's been over 100 years since Jair destroyed the Warlock Lord in the NES *Shadowgate*... But now the Evil has returned, and our hero is the Halfling Del Cottonwood, sole survivor of a caravan raid. Imprisoned in Shadowgate castle, he plans his escape, but while doing so, he is contacted by Lakmir — a once-powerful but now dead (?) sorcerer. It seems Belzar, one of Lakmir's apprentices, has strayed down the path of Black Magic and is attempting to revive the Warlock Lord...

Shadowgate... talk about a blast from the past. I guess Jair put down the Bad Man for a real long time, because a sequel didn't see the light of day on the SNES (though, a pseudo-sequel did make an appearance on TurboGrafx CD of all places). On the NES, this was a Man's game, packed full of puzzles and not afraid to kill you.



Torches, talismans, slingshots, swords, rings, rods, keys, and candles. Over 10 years ago, there was a land inhabited by trolls, sphinxes, wraiths, wyverns, and werewolves. This was the world of *Shadowgate*... A time when words and a vivid imagination were all the paint and canvas needed to see beyond 8-bit graphics. The NES spawned that graphic adventure — a game which many have dubbed "the greatest adventure game ever." With expectations like that, is there any way the N64 version of *Shadowgate* can compete? The answer is probably not. Instead, the programmers overhauled the dungeon with a 64-bit facelift and wrote another chapter in the (hopefully) to-be-continued legacy of *Shadowgate* (Last Minute ECM's Note: not to mention the ill-fated *Beyond Shadowgate* on TurboGrafx-16 CD...a very cool game).



Shadowgate 64
Trials of the Four Towers

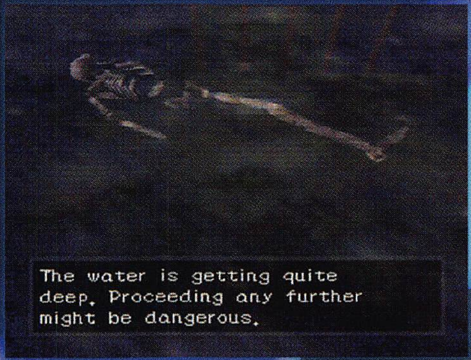
Fast forward to today. 128-bit consoles are a reality (far from that humble 8-bit origin); arcade quality graphics have come home; and we have lost sight of what an adventure game really is <Warning! Soapbox rant approaching!>. Countless games today are labeled action/adventures, but none of them give you that feeling that you're playing an adventure game. Ever since *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil*, most of today's game puzzles have devolved into switch-flipping and medallion fitting <That soapbox is gonna hit us, brace for impact.>.

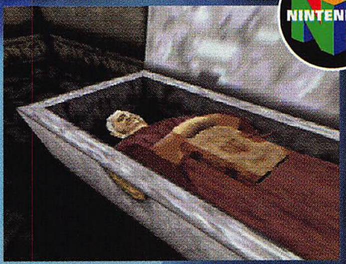
OK, this is a personal pet peeve of mine... Why are game developers so scared to stump a gamer with challenging puzzles these



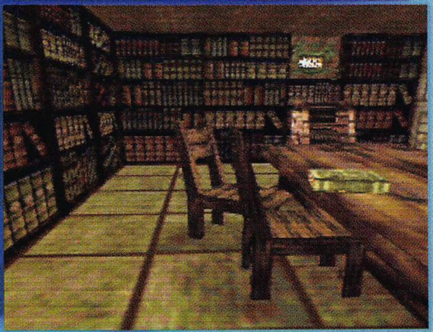
 | EGGO: Are you man enough? | Developer - Kemco | Publisher - Kemco | 1 Player | Available Spring





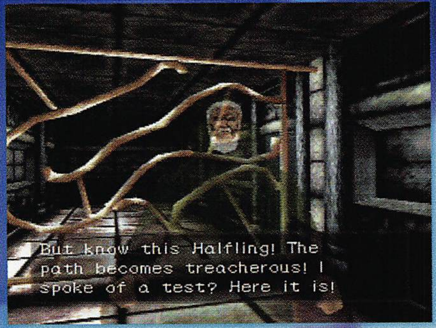












days? <Incoming!> Are they fearful that we'll quickly lose interest and move on to the next gleaming piece of eye candy? Well, I can't speak for the masses, but I'm willing to accept sub-par graphics in lieu of solid gameplay. Case in point — *Shadowgate 64*. This game **feels** like an adventure game of old. Maybe it's the dull colors of the castle's towers or the lack of wide-open, outdoor environments... whatever it is, *Shadowgate 64* has the look and feel of a true adventure. From the second you wake up in your prison cell, you know you're in a dungeon, not a network of caves or corridors. We're talking closed quarters, stone walls, skeletons... and the monsters which made said skeletons.

OK, so the homely graphics don't exactly take full advantage of Nintendo's 'fun machine' (do you get nauseous every time you hear that term?), but the engine looks incredibly solid. As for the gameplay, it's like the *Shadowgate* of old — loaded with puzzles/mindbenders/controller breakers. I almost broke down in tears when I saw the *Resident Evil* medallion puzzle in this game (is nothing sacred?). But thankfully, it was a one-time occurrence, and there are many other original brainteasers for you to mull over for hours. Expect to be

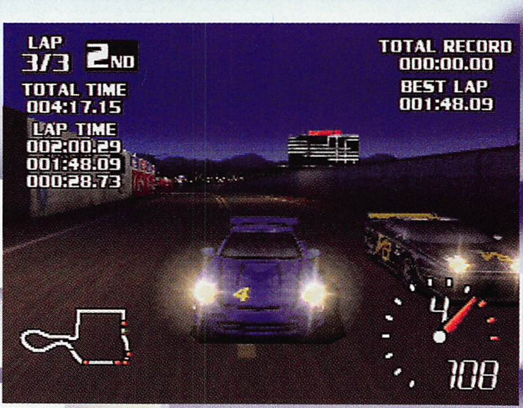
This game 'feels' like an adventure game of old.

stumped, at least once... for this **is** *Shadowgate*. Whatever your vice is — banging your head against a desk, throwing your controller at the wall, or pulling your hair out — it's gonna happen. You've had fair warning.

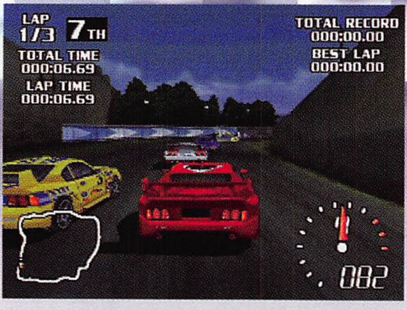
So is there anything wrong so far? Personally, I harbor a deep resentment for the look spring, which is always on. Controls are like *Turok*, in that the analog stick lets you look around, while the C buttons handle movement. And as soon as you ease up on the analog, look spring automatically centers your view. Perhaps it's because I'm used to playing corridor games with look spring off, but I find it leads to lots of unnecessary camera shifting... and then disorientation. If you're a corridor-queasy gamer like me, then be ready to bust out the Dramamine, because this game can make you sick, but it's still playable.

And in case you were wondering, expect to die a lot, because it only takes a small mis-step... before you're thinking, "When *was* the last time I saved? ...Oh @?%!" This game lays down the law, and it's up to you to decide whether you want to play by the rules. Duke it out to the bitter end... or concede defeat and go back to playing *Goldeneye*. Ninja gamers, the gauntlet has been thrown... will you pick it up? E

World Driver Championship







When it comes to realistic racing games, the N64 has never had much to turn heads. Games like *Lamborghini 64* and *Monaco GP* took a serious back seat to fruity (but fun) cart racers such as *Mario Kart 64* and *Diddy Kong Racing*. For a system that attracts a primarily younger audience and prides itself on multiplayer goodness it was no surprise that these titles sold in the millions. But what about older audiences looking for a bit of realism as opposed to smiley faces and gorillas?

Midway, the gaming giants behind *NFL Blitz*, are looking to fill the void with their newest racer, *World Driver Championship*. From what I've seen and played so far, *WDC* appears to be progressing smoothly. In fact, the only unrealistic aspects about *WDC* are the names of the selectable cars... a Dodge Viper called the Ram Venom?! (lets just say sponsors don't come cheap!)

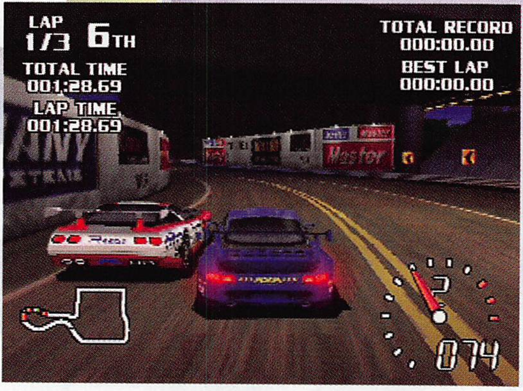
The graphics in *WDC* are the main selling point. Large colorful courses and awesome vehicle design had me checking twice to see if I was indeed playing an N64 game. The only drawback is, in order to select the high res mode, you have to play the game in letterbox form and subject yourself to massive amounts of frame drop... very lame.

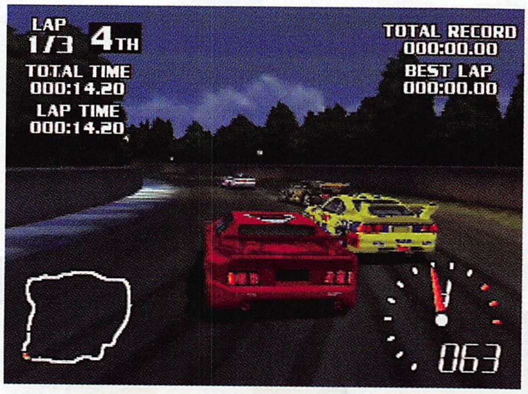
Unfortunately, *WDC* needs serious help in the control department. I realize the game's early and is bound to undergo several alterations before it's released, but sadly, games with horrific control do wind up on shelves and somehow sell... lots.

Similar to *Ridge Racer Type 4*, *WDC* offers players the chance to join several different race teams. Depending on your success as a driver, faster versions of your car will also become available (there are up to three modified versions of each vehicle).

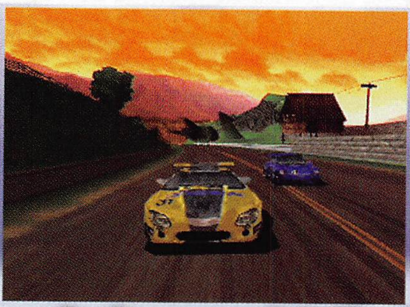
The sound effects also need a bit of work in this game. Whatever happened to sampling real engine sounds? I realize developers love to throw in cheesy tunes whenever possible, but when all your cars sound alike, you got problems.

While the N64's library might not consist of big name racers like *Turismo* or *Ridge Racer*, titles like *WDC* will hopefully pave the way for more realistic racing games. Besides, I'm getting a little tired of banana peels and mushrooms. **F**











A good looking N64 racer... I must be dreaming!!!

 FURY: I'M GETTING A LITTLE TIRED OF BANANA PEELS AND MUSHROOMS. | DEVELOPER - BOSS PUBLISHER - MIDWAY | 2 PLAYERS AVAILABLE SUMMER







A new Legend in the making...

Along time ago, in a lifetime far, far away... I lived in arcades. Growing up with the likes of *Jungle Hunt*, *Spy Hunter*, and *Double Dragon*, I honed my skills on games such as *Rush 'N Attack*, *Ikari Warriors*, and *Shinobi*. Fourteen years ago (gee, it **does** feel like a lifetime)... the first four-player arcade games debuted. I say *Gauntlet* came first, ECM thinks it's *Quartet*. No point in debating the identity of the chicken or the egg, because back then *Gauntlet* was simply revolutionary. Four players... fighting back-to-back... protecting the weak... hacking and slashing through wave after wave of monsters... and running from Death himself... That's probably the dream the programmers had in mind; instead it was usually: stealing food from the hungry, pushing the smaller guy into the monsters, and lookin' out for #1... Ahh, the good ol' days.

Fast-forward to 1998 — Midway revives the classic with *Gauntlet Legends* in the arcade. Not quite the same as the original, but all the pieces were there: the characters, monsters, generators, potions, keys, and Death... along with some new stuff: Pojo the chicken, bosses, and special attacks. Now it's time to bring the Legend home, and Midway has seen fit to dump a ton of extra goodies into the console version.

We're talkin' new levels, characters, and enemies. In fact, this game has only two of the arcade levels (Volcanic Mountain & Valkyrie's Castle), and even they have been modified with new puzzles and items. The remaining console levels are brand new, and feature fresh monsters, items, and bosses. Additionally, each character class has been split into four (talk about split-personality). Whereas the arcade had two characters for each class (e.g., Valkyrie/Tigress), the console GL will have four characters per class. You can also look forward to hearing a finely-crafted tale from the folks at Midway, told through the use of in-game cinemas.

The build we have is pre-alpha, so this game will see a lot of retooling before reaching your hands. In fact, there weren't any sound effects in this version, though the music was there, and it's pretty good by N64 standards (which are about as low as El Niño's after a late-night Sangria binge). Fortunately, the characters are well animated. Even when four players are engaged in massive bloodletting, paving their way through hordes of monsters, the game doesn't slow down (what would you expect from the company that delivered the incredible 60 fps *Mortal Kombat 4* on the N64?). Unfortunately, the arcade characters have been zapped by the Infanto Ray and are smaller than their arcade counterparts.

Since there's still a long way to go for *Gauntlet Legends*, let's hope Midway comes through on all those promises, because this four-player game is screaming for N64 status. **E**











Gauntlet Legends

DEVELOPER - MIDWAY
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY

1-4 PLAYERS
AVAILABLE 3RD QTR.

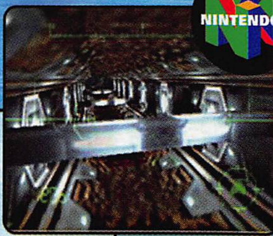
EGGO: ELF NEEDS VALKYRIE BADLY

Coming Soon

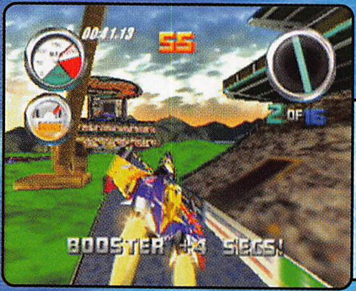
Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon







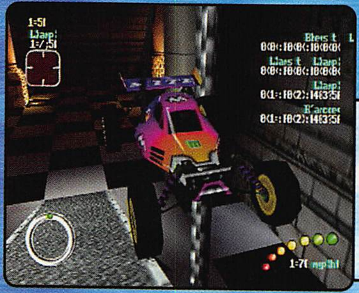
Jet Force Gemini (Rare) — Closer and closer this gem comes to game stores everywhere. Combining elements of action, shooting and racing, this one is sure to be a looker at E3. Look in our E3 issue for the full blown coverage!







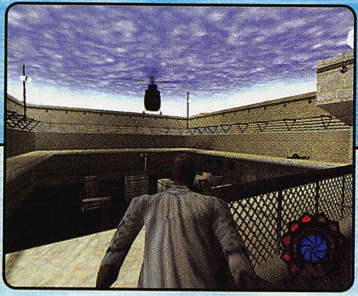
Hydro Thunder (Midway) — This lovely arcade racer is coming home to the N64 in full blown form! Race souped-up boats, complete with jet engines, throughout rough waters.





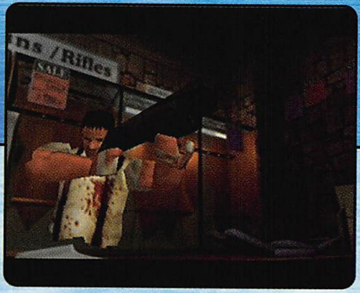
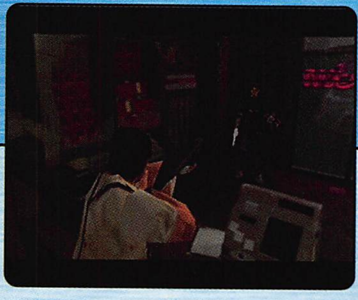
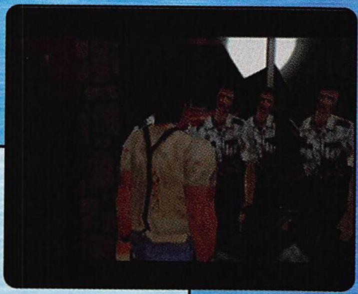


ReVolt (Acclaim) — The RC Pro-Am we've been waiting for on the N64?! Well, not quite... but believe us folks, this is as close as it gets. Stay tuned next issue for a full preview.



Shadow Man (Acclaim) — Again, the much anticipated comic book turned video game comes closer to becoming a reality. Gaze upon these new shots and look in our next issue for more!

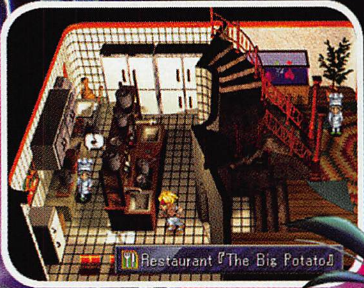
Resident Evil 2 (Capcom) — An N64 horror nightmare come true?! All rumors of a N64 Resident Evil game have come true with Resident Evil 2 coming out near the end of this year!



STATUS GOOD
GOLD
This guy is searching for his next meal—and you're it.
STATUS GOOD
GOLD
Watch where you tread—torturous traps await the unwary adventurer.
Whip your way through Dracula's army of the undead.
Killer outfit. Too bad the night life sucks.
Get geared up for the bloodiest vampire battles ever. In Castlevania's 12th incarnation, you enter a tangled, trap-filled castle populated by the evil Count and his minions. Go as one of two fearless fighters of your choice, equipped with whoop-ass weaponry. But be warned, while you can dress to kill, if you lack the skill—your night is really gonna suck.
Holy Water
Castlevania®
NINTENDO64
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
KONAMI.
1-900-896-HINT (4468) www.konami.com $0.95 per minute charge. $1.25 per minute support from game counselor. Touch tone phone required. Minors must have parental permission before dialing. Hints are available 24 hours a day. Live support Monday - Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm PST only. Prices and availability subject to change. U.S. accessibility only. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Nintendo 64 and the 3-D "N" logo are trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc. ©1996 Nintendo of America Inc. CASTLEVANIA and Konami are registered trademarks of Konami Co., Ltd. ©1998 Konami of America, Inc. All Rights Reserved.











1999 will be remembered as the year of the RPG. In Japan, Square gives us **four** *Final Fantasies — FFVIII* and *FF Collection* (*FFIV, FFV,* and *FFVI*) — as well as the incredible-looking sequels *Saga Frontier 2* and *Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana*. While Enix, the only company that can be mentioned in the same sentence as Square, RPG-wise, is planning to finally release *Dragon Quest VII* later this year. In the U.S., things aren't too shabby either... we're getting *FFVIII, FF Anthology* (no *FFIV*, though <sob>), *Saga Frontier 2*, and now SCEA's *Star Ocean: The Second Story*, which was developed by Enix and published last year in Japan. Sadly, this game fell through the cracks of our import coverage because we were drowning in a sea of

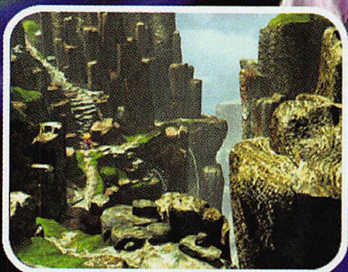
"...you're looking at 2400 hours of gameplay."

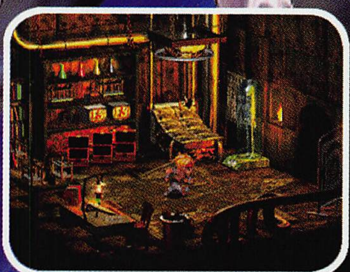
Christmas titles, and none of us could tear our eyes away from that smiling, blue hedgehog.

Now, in this pre-E3 period, games are scarce and good games are but a myth... until now. Give *Star Ocean: The Second Story* a chance, and you'll quickly be lost in the world of Expel. It changed the way I look at RPGs. Prior to *SO*, I found myself drifting more and more towards Square's cinematic approach to storytelling (read *Final Fantasy VIII*). But *Star Ocean* renews my faith that it doesn't take a monumental budget and boatloads of CG to make a fantastic RPG. Prior to this, none of Square's competition could deliver the total package. *Suikoden* had plenty of characters, but not enough game-time to get to know them. *Tales of Destiny* had an interesting battle









STAR OCEAN
THE SECOND STORY

 EGGO: Jump in the Ocean... The water's fine. | Developer - Tri-Ace/Enix | Publisher - SCEA | 1 Player | Available June 8 | Viewpoint Score :95











system, but the fighting was far too frequent. *Shadow Madness* had the story, but the battles were an eyesore.

When things looked their worst, here comes *Star Ocean*, kicking down doors and taking no prisoners. It borrows ideas from other games (which is inevitable in RPGs), but *Star Ocean* refines them and improves upon them. Here's just one example: in other RPGs (e.g., *Saga Frontier 2*), characters learn new special attacks gradually; however in *Star Ocean*, characters not only learn special attacks, they also learn individual skills, group skills, and career specialties. Another example is the random encounters: *Tales of Destiny* had a fun battle system, but because you were fighting a bit too much, it quickly outgrew its welcome. *SO* also has an innovative battle system, but the frequency of the fights is well-balanced with the exploration. Showing fine polish in all categories, *SO:TSS* delivers that knockout punch which previous RPGs came up short on.

Story is the driving force behind any landmark RPG, and *Star Ocean* steps up to the plate and hits a homerun here. Choosing between either Claude C. Kenny or Rena Lanford, you'll see different parts of a single larger story, depending who your main character is. If you play both characters, you'll see how their stories intertwine and overlap, similar to Leon and Claire in *Resident Evil 2*.





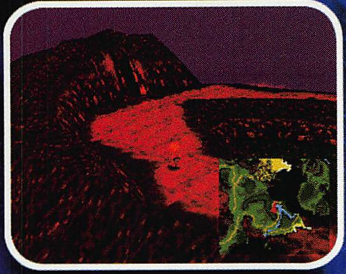


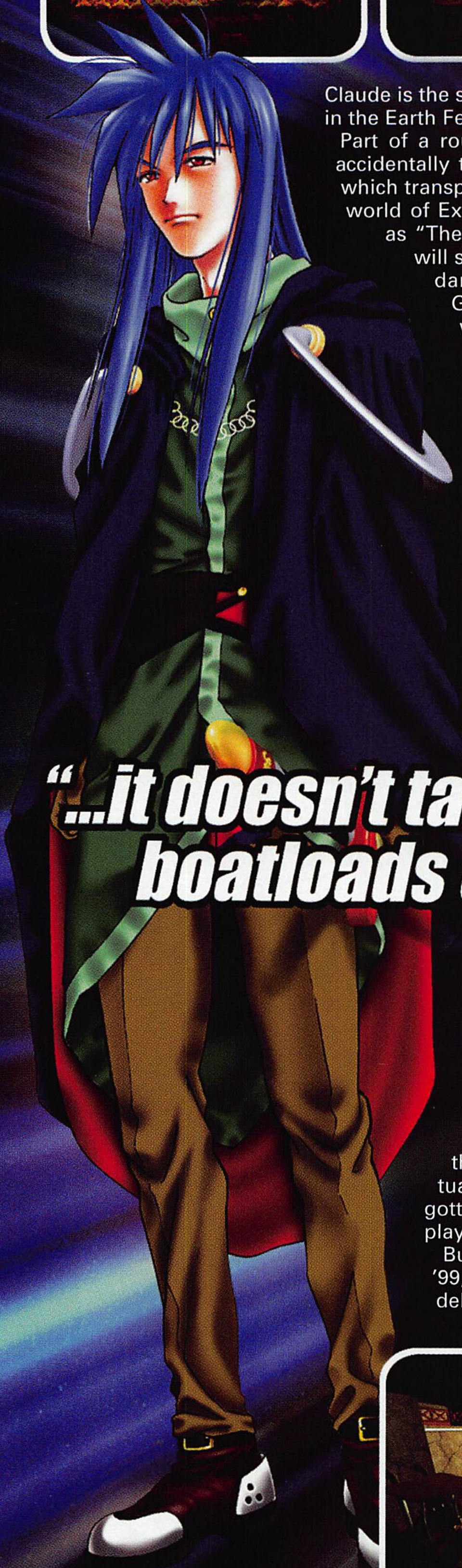
















Claude is the son of a famous admiral in the Earth Federation.

Part of a routine landing party, he accidentally touches an alien object which transports him to the magical world of Expel, where he's viewed as "The Warrior," the one who will save the planet from the dangers of the Sorcery Globe. Rena is a girl who grew up on Expel in the town of Arlia. Though she isn't supposed to, she finds out that her mother is not her true mother. Found abandoned in the forest at an early age, Rena wants to know about her past, so she joins up with Claude to discover her true heritage and why she has these magical powers.

Let's get this out of the way now: *Star Ocean: The Second Story* has the most replay value of any RPG. I'll be generous and estimate the playing time at 30 hours. With over 80 different endings, you're looking at 2400 hours of gameplay. That amounts to playing for 100 days straight without a break. Eighty different endings come about when the story unfolds in a million different ways.

If you're a big fan of side quests, *Star Ocean* **is the** game for you. Every time you meet a new character, he/she has his/her own problems and agenda to attend to. Or should you go to the Mountain Palace to get the Silver Goblet to exorcise Ashton's dragons? Or perhaps it's time to slay the evil monster which has been terrorizing that nearby town. Course you could always go to the continent of El, like you're supposed to, but the mayor said to stay on the continent of Cross for a while. No matter where you go or what sidequests you undertake, the choice is always yours — there are no rails on this RPG. Every dark recess you explore fleshes out the story more, and it all affects the final outcome.

"...it doesn't take a monumental budget and boatloads of CG to make a fantastic RPG"

Another important aspect of benchmark RPGs is the music. *Star Ocean* shines yet again, showing off what a CD game is capable of. We're talking symphonic scores a la *FF Tactics*, with an occasional hint of 16-bit techno mixed in for good measure. Compared to the music in *FFVII* and *VIII*, *SO* crushes those latter-day Nobuo Uematsu scores. This RPG's music is second only to *FF Tactics*. Start shopping for the soundtrack now.

So what problems does this game have? There's just one flaw: the voice acting. The Japanese version of this game had 'professional voice actors' whereas I don't think that term even exists in the States. Instead of keeping the original Japanese voices, SCEA dubbed the speech into English, and it's far from professional. Though it was painful at first, I eventually accepted it — the voice actors now actually sound like their characters' age: 17-23. All I gotta say is... "Unexpectedly weak." However, don't let this single blemish dissuade you from playing this game.

Buy *Star Ocean: The Second Story* right away, because it's shaping up to be the best RPG of '99, and that's saying a lot this year (we won't know for sure until Square's localization team delivers the goods this September). E







"I feel like we're having a secret meeting"

Whenever you leave or enter a town, the option will come up for "Private Actions." Hit a button and your characters will get together and chat. They may flirt with each other, fight, tell you where to go next, or have nothing to say — it all depends on who is in your party and how they've been reacting to each other previously. After the meeting, they'll split up and wander the town on their own. From there, you can talk to the individuals you like, while ignoring the rest. All of this impacts the story accordingly.





"Mad Skillz"





Saga Frontier 2 featured characters learning/discovering special attacks over time. Well, *Star Ocean: The Second Story* takes that idea and runs away with it. In addition to inventing new special attacks in battle (called Killer Attacks), this game offers characters a long list of skills to learn. You'll gain Skill Points through fighting, and these points can be distributed among the skills you wish to master. One example is Kitchen Knife, which will give you agility with cooking utensils (helpful for whipping up culinary delights... and no, I'm not kidding here). Skills can also be learned from guilds, all around the world. When you've learned the right combination of skills, your character's specialities start developing. Metallurgy will allow you to develop minerals (iron, silver, gold) into weapons and armor. Cooking lets you make your own foods to replenish HPs and MPs... and it's cheaper to buy raw ingredients than to purchase regular foods (eating out is expensive)! There are group specialities as well, which require multiple member proficiency for that speciality to light up (e.g., Identify All!).



"King of Fighters"

Similar to *Tales of Destiny/Phantasia*, the battle system in this game is real-time, with every character acting of his own accord. With everyone attacking at the same time, the fights are extremely quick and action-packed, full of combos galore (a magic spell might pin an enemy while your swordsmen slice and dice). You can give mass orders to your whole party (similar to *Dragon Force* on the Saturn). Or you can control each party member individually, by issuing orders such as "Protect friends," "Conserve, Magic Points," or "Spread out and attack!" (the ol' *Dragon Force* mainstay). Also, just like the group abilities mentioned above, there are group combos to be learned, similar to those in *Chrono Trigger*, where multiple party members get together for a mega-combo.









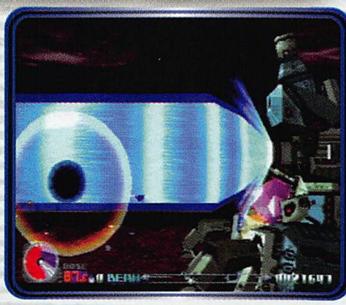
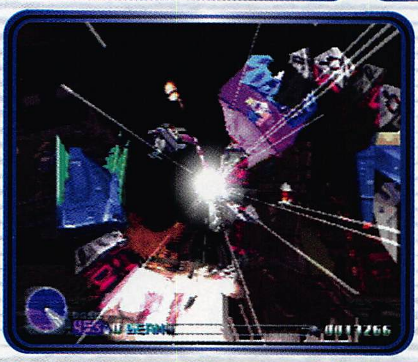



Wow, another shooter on PlayStation that wasn't immediately sentenced to the rifle range. I must have been a really good boy this past year to warrant such a wave of import blasting nirvana on a console that was generally reviled for this genre prior to this sudden, unexpected (but much-deserved) boon. Maybe all the planets lined up just so, the tea leaves were favorable enough, or perhaps it was the death of the shooter console of choice (that's the Saturn for the less astute) that left a huge gaping void for PS shooter developers to fill. Amazingly they've filled it admirably thus far with *G-Darius*, and the PS port of *Thunder Force 5* (a far cry from the days of Stahlfeder and *Two-Tenkaku*... please... kill... me) and now, in flies *R-Type Delta* with all guns blazing to help keep the streak alive.

After the less-than-warm and fuzzy feeling derived from R-Types earlier this year (more like sick and dizzy), I didn't know what to expect from the freshly exhumed Irem ('games' like *Super R-Type*, *In the Hunt*, and SNES *Gun Force* didn't contribute to a long, prosperous life). Now *R-Type* has stepped into the polygon age: Gone are the sprite-based craft of the old guard, replaced with shiny, T-mapped polys (the sprite unemployment office must be drowning in fresh applicants, <grah>) marking the end of 'old skool' blasters in their natural, sprite-based habitat... let's hope the shooter can thrive in 3D 'captivity' (albeit of the 2.5D variety).

R·TYPE Δ



Among the forefathers of modern shooters (*Gradius*, *Darius*, and more recently *Raiden* among that elite club), people that enjoyed *R-Type* were among the more patient gamers out there (not patient on a mahjong level, but close). The game required much more pattern memorization and less in the way of 'intuitive' gameplay. Instead of being armed with adrenaline and *SF*-style, Eggo-esque reflexes as the only means of getting through, you're going to have to do a lot more 'thinking' to pass a game of *R-Type* (yeah, you actually have to use your brain in this one... bummer). For example, whereas life and death in most other shooters is based more on your ability to successfully navigate huge fields of bullets and debris (praying to the shooter gods that your







ECM: GET ME SOME TYPE-R POSITIVE... STAT! | DEVELOPER - IREM | PUBLISHER - AGETEC | 1 PLAYER | AVAILABLE XXXX



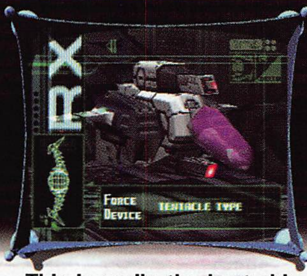
R9

The classic *R-Type* craft, replete with the "Standard Type" Force Device that all the 'old skool' fans will check out for about a minute before moving on to the much better ships.



R13

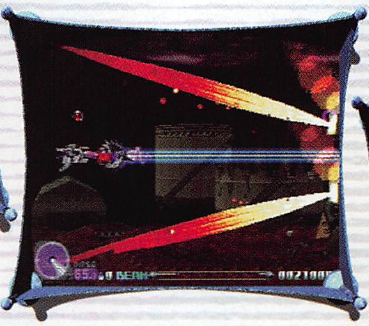
Only for the most skilled players, the R13 features the "Anchor Type" Force Device. A 'rope' tethers the option to the main craft and requires careful manipulation to achieve the fiery destruction of enemes.



RX

This is easily the best ship of the lot, and comes equipped with the best Force Device: the "Tentacle Type". The option unit homes in on the neatest enemy with all guns blazing, raining death on unwitting foes.






kidneys hold up against the torrent of adrenaline that's racing through your body), in *Delta* you'll die and treat it as a learning experience for the next go round now that you know where to be at just the right moment to avoid a fiery, shrapnel-filled death. Sure, most shooters require some pattern memorization, but *RTD* and its siblings raised it to an art form. Only problem with this type of game is that if you aren't among the aforementioned patient gamers, you'll never get far into the game without breaking a pad or two — dying every few seconds just so you know where to be next time out gets old fast (I got over that when *Hellfire* was new on Genesis).



Beyond the slightly questionable gameplay, the graphics in *RTD* are initially stunning. With a high screen resolution everything looks extremely clean and sharp. The frame rate, for the most part, hovers around thirty and at times seems to push up towards the godly heights of sixty before crashing into the depths of the teens; a malady typical of the PS shooter in these harrowing, post-sprite years (*RayStorm* and *G-Darius* also suffered heavily from this affliction). The only real problem with the visuals lay with the textures themselves. Apparently Irem traded sharp, vibrant textures for a higher display resolution lending a decidedly chunky look, with hard edges and a serious lack of color. Not to say there aren't a lot of beautiful transparencies (the PS' gift to gamers everywhere) and brilliant water effects (stage 2, specifically), but the initial graphical shock wears off quickly... and then you're left with the game.





What everything boils down to is this: If you don't have *G-Darius* and *Thunder Force 5*, then (and only then) you may want to check out *RTD*. Those that prefer the high-stress, kidney-blackened, controller-snapping shooter playing (myself for instance) will want to stay far, far away. Looks like the streak just ended with a bit of a mis-step on Agetec's part. Still, if you're desperate for some shooter relief, you could do worse. **ECM**





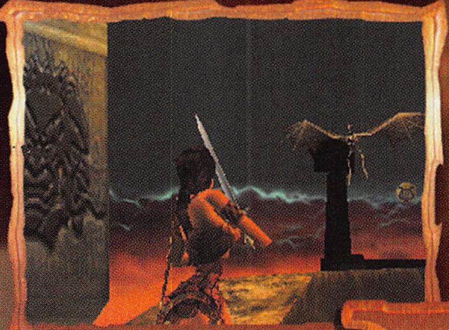



XENA
Warrior Princess

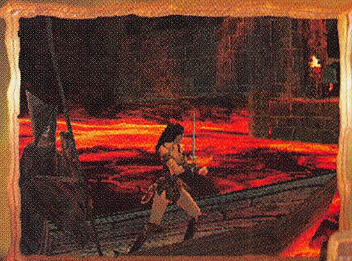



And there the hero stood, faced with one of her most formidable adversaries ever — the mighty cyclops. Wielding her chakram, she wailed her battle cry and waded into battle with the mythic beast. No it isn't Odysseus, nor one of Sinbad's epic adventures, but Xena, the Warrior Princess. While some women need a man like a fish needs a bicycle, those same butch babes certainly can't get enough of their New Zealand honey... and after her National Anthem... er, slip, neither can we.

Sam Raimi's wunder-woman has finally made the cross-over to the video game world, starring in a third-person adventure that is fit for the likes of Homer (ok, so maybe not Homer, but it sure looks cool). The beautiful Gabrielle is in the evil clutches of the Minotaur King and Amazon Queen. What unspeakable plans they have for Xena's little side-kick, Zeus only knows, but it is imperative that she is saved!




Xena: Warrior Princess, developed by USDA (Universal Studios Digital Adventures), remains true to the television show by including many of the series' familiar faces and places. There will be eight environments to explore, including Valarion's Castle to the Temple of the Pinnacle. The denizens of these places range from ogres and gorgons to sorcerers and the gatekeeper of Hades himself, Dyzan. Weapons are numerous and many items are hidden throughout the game for you to find.





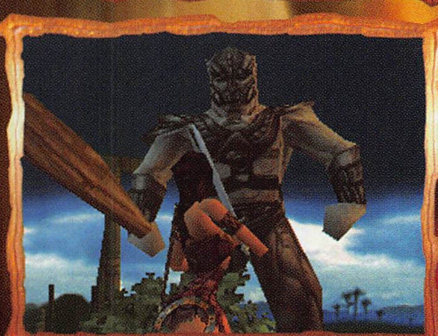




Developers are boasting a beast of an engine that will supply fast-paced action, stellar texture mapping and light sourcing- all at a consistent 30fps. Impressive claims, however unproven. Also yet to be seen is whether this all translates into good gameplay, the Achilles Heel to many a project; and frankly, I remain skeptical. The screens look beautiful, with their vibrant environments and larger-than-life monsters... it could become another *Deathtrap Dungeon*. Then again, it could be a fantasy *Syphon Filter*, which would make it a formidable game and a frontrunner for Game of the Year.

I wonder if anyone would license Raimi's *Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*? **EN**





Take 2 Saved the Queen! Noooo!



Carjacking, kidnapping, murder, drug-dealing... Disgusted, I turn off the evening news and power up my PlayStation. Rookies... I'll show 'em how it's done. Sure, it's been a year since I played *Grand Theft Auto*, so the gangsta skills may be a little rusty, but as soon as I jack my first car, I'm totally into *GTA: London 1969*.

For the record, *GTA:L1969* isn't a new *Grand Theft Auto*... it's an expansion/mission pack, which requires a copy of the original game to play (at least they didn't name it *Blast Radius*). For those who don't own the original, Take 2 is offering a promotion to discount both games when you buy them together.

Instead of terrorizing the familiar confines of the U.S. of A., *GTA: London 1969* takes the felonies overseas, and back in time to...





London circa 1969. This'll be a treat for our English audience... but will American gamers recognize Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, or the Tower Bridge? Ahh, probably not, but...

There **are** a bunch of cool cars to steal, some of which are inspired by the James Bond movies and *Austin Powers*. There's also 32 new missions of treachery, along with famous villains who populate the seedy underworld of this game. It's a shame that the mission to kidnap the Queen didn't make it. <sigh> It would've been fun to ransom her for a live performance by the Beatles and a keg of Bass Ale.

All the usual nuttiness you've come to expect from this series is here: ruin tea-time by running over pedestrians, carjack passing cars, outrun the cops, steal an ambulance, deal drugs — basically everything you see in today's headlines... minus the White House interns. Steal a car from somebody then run him over with it? You get an Irony Bonus. Gotta love that DMA humor... Do you really hate that European thing they call "Football" (we call it Soccer)? Then it's time to make a trip to the 'Football' coliseum to gun down some innocents. Oh yes, Posty has had a bad day indeed...

Hopefully the ratings people won't get up in arms about this controversial title the second time around. After all, we're not killin' apple pie-fed Americans... nope, they're just Brits ("The Americans are coming! The Americans are coming!"). And in case you're wishing for a new *GTA* game, there is a real sequel in the works. But don't expect to see that till later in the year. Now if you'll excuse me, I gotta 'borrow' that double decker bus over there... E



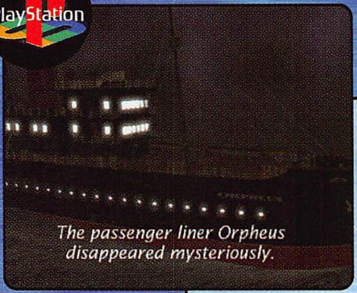
Developer - DMA
Publisher - Take 2

1 Player
Available Now

Eggo: Never mind the U.K., here's Grand Theft Auto...

COMING SOON

Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon



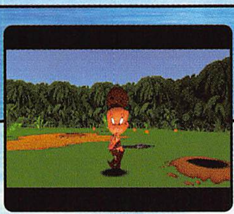
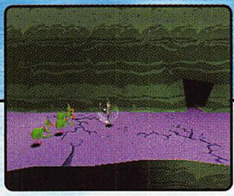






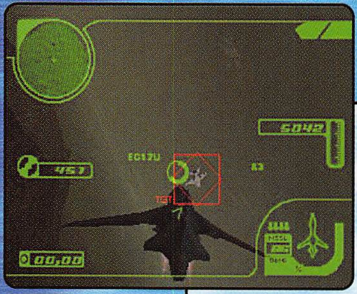


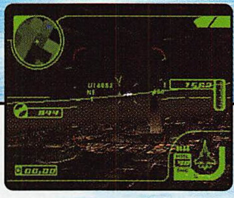
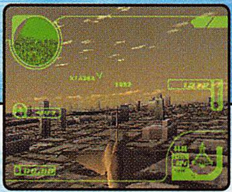
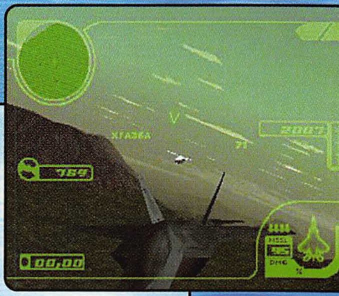
Echo Night (Agetec) — Think "Myst" meets "Silent Hill" and you've got en eerie, supsense, puzzler. Taking place in the late 1930's, you must find out the mystery of your father's death which is somehow connected to a ship lost at sea.



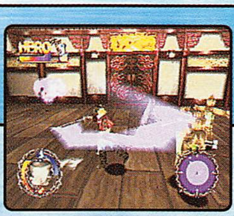
Bugs Bunny: Lost in Time (Infogrames) — That crazy wabbit is at it again, and this time in 3D! Bugs gets lost in time, and, in order to get back in his time, travels to different ages fighting the likes of Elmer Fudd, Marvin the Martian, and other Looney Tunes baddies.



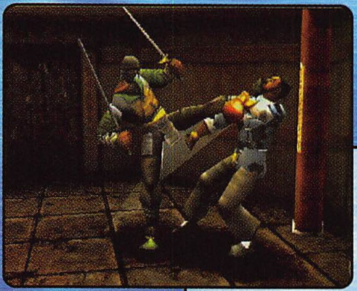
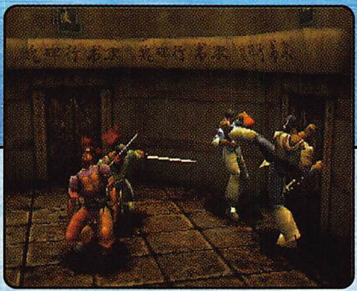
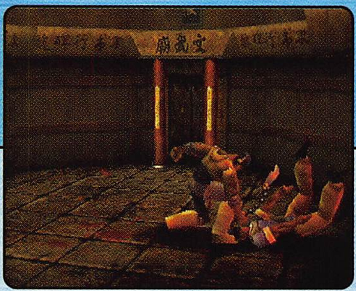
Ace Combat 3 (Namco) — The third installment of Namco's aerial amazement comes with more planes, more firepower, and some graphical air superiority. And with some AI tweaking, AC3 will be one of the most challenging simulation games this year!







Rising Zan (Agetec) — Okay, the idea sounds kind of fruity, but Rising Zan might just turn out okay. Take the role of a samurai gun-slinger as you venture forth into the Wild West, themed in a Japanese style. If anything, it sure will be different.


Wu Tang (Activision) — Killah bees on a swarm! Yes, the rap group Wu Tang Clan gets their fighting game chance, featuring RZA and Ol' Dirty Bastard (or Sweet Baby Jesus). Let's hope it's not a Shaq Fu.

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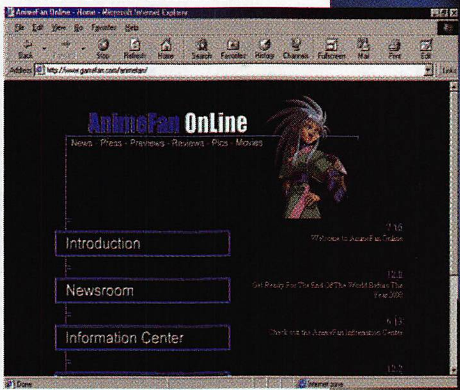
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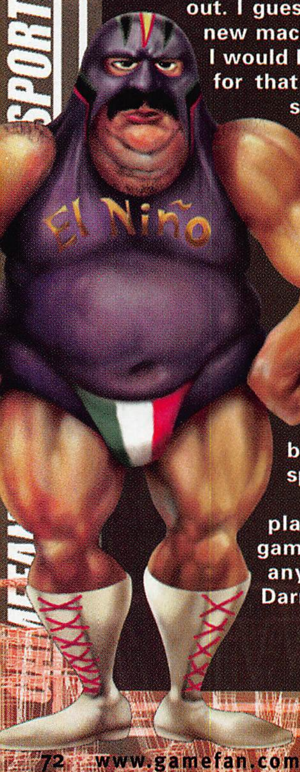
June is a good time of the year. The baseball season is in full swing (and the Sox are doing just fine without Mo, like I predicted) while hoops and hockey are entering their most fevered times. Ray Bourque has broken the all-time goals scored record for defensemen and Dennis Rodman was booted off the Lakers (I predicted that, too). I only wish my predictions for my fantasy baseball team were as good... I'm in the cellar. What's worse, ECM is doing better than me and his knowledge of the sport is questionable.

With the exception of Griffey, all of the year's baseball sims are out. On the PlayStation, Triple Play edges out Baseball 2000 for top honors. Interplay's title, which held the crown for the past two years, didn't make as big an improvement as TP. In fairness, I can't crown All Star baseball the N64 winner, but I find it hard to believ that Griffey can outperform that giant.

The next stop, fo me, is E3, where I hope to sample the many savory Dreamcast titles. EA Sports is playing it safe [lame?] and sitting this early round out. I guess their faith in Sega's new machine isn't as strong as I would have thought– or liked for that matter. A Sega console without its EA titles seems incomplete. Oh well, Visual Concepts have a football and basketball title that look gorgeous; not to mention a little title called Blitz 2000, from Midway. This could be a very good fall for sports gamers...

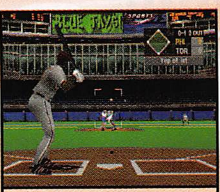
Until next time, don't play any "extreme" games and don't accept any packages from Darryl Strawberry.

El Niño



Two straight years I touted this title as the best of the genre; not this year. *Baseball 2000* (formerly known as *VR Baseball*) remains an excellent sim with improved sound and graphics but falls just short of the massive improvements to *Triple Play 2000*. I strongly urge EA Sports acloytes to check this game out, as well, because it offers another fantastic baseball experience.

G 8 | C 8 | P 9 | M 7 | O 7 | **89**



Baseball 2000
PlayStation
Interplay

I have to admit that I am not the baseball nut that El Niño is, so much of the nuance is lost on me. I do love a good baseball game, though, and *Baseball 2000* certainly ranks as one of the better ones. While it doesn't have the graphics and sound of *Triple Play* or *MLB*, it does have great gameplay and a batter/pitcher interface that is easy for even the casual sports fan like me to use.

G 7 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 | **80**

So what the hell happened to these guys' spines!? They all look like they've got neck braces on. Aside from the unusual player models, 3DO manages to put together a satisfactory baseball sim. However, no points will be awarded for originality or extra credit since *High Heat* fails to breathe any new life into an increasingly stagnant genre.

G 6 | C 7 | P 7 | M 6 | O 5 | **74**



High Heat Baseball 2000
PlayStation
3DO

I've never thought of 3DO as a sports developer and I'm not sure I should, having seen *High Heat*. While it held my interest for awhile, I can't imagine playing it for very long. It's not as easy for me to make contact at the plate, as it seems to be for El Niño, but the batting is fun. The ridiculous player model (there is only one), makes everyone look like a Corky and the commentary is only so-so.

G 6 | C 7 | P 7 | M 6 | O 6 | **75**

Admittedly, the mountain biking can be amusing, but that is all I will admit to. *3Xtreme* is another bloated PlayStation title that hopes to hide its major shortcomings behind slick licensing and (no doubt) an annoying Gen-X ad campaign. Sure, its predecesors sold well, but so did *Frogger*. If I never see another extreme sports game, it will be too soon (an unfortunate).

G 5 | C 6 | P 5 | M 4 | O 2 | **51**



3Xtreme
PlayStation
989 Studios

Am I missing something? Where's the gameplay here? What do you mean there is none? AGH! This is a coaster which is so bad that there's a hidden game inside which they don't tell you about — the Ironman Race. If you can play this for more than 30 minutes, then you're more of a man than I am. The only fun in this game is the nasty crashes, but that gets old after 29 minutes.

G 6 | C 6 | P 4 | M 7 | O 5 | **54**

I've waited a long time for a superbike racer on the PlayStation and after seeing the mess that is *CHR* I'm completely prepared to continue my wait. Terrible graphics and a super poor frame rate destroy any sense of speed the programmers might have hoped to convey. EA needs to step back and take a good look at their titles as of late... I for one aint buyin'.

G 4 | C 7 | P 6 | M 3 | O 8 | **45**



Castrol Honda Racing
PlayStation
Electronic Arts

I've long been wondering why the PlayStation, with its huge number of racing games, has never had a superbike racing game, aside from the excellent *Moto Racer* and its followup, *Moto Racer 2* — and even that had it interspersed with motocross. No dirt to be found here, 'cept at the edges of the street. A very decent racing game, all around, and it's about time.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 8 | **82**

Since *Gran Turismo* and *Ridge Racer Type 4* have pushed the benchmark a couple of stories, my jaded co-workers have scoffed at all that is not them. I am not as critical, taking the position that *Sports Car GT* is like the working man's *Gran Turismo*. The graphics and control aren't as good, but still delivers a solid racing experience — and with cool European race cars!

G 7 | C 7 | P 7 | M 7 | O 7 | **77**



Sports Car GT
PlayStation
Electronic Arts

Here's a game that takes too long to get into. The control just doesn't feel right until you get some of the faster cars, and by then, it's just too late. Tiny tracks, too; I've raced the Laguna Seca track in a lot of different racing games, but in this, it feels too small. Still, I'd call it an above average racing game, but in the over-populated world of PlayStation racing games, that's just not good enough.

G 7 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8.5 | O 7 | **79**

It's Psygnosis' *F1* without the personality, which makes it a gaming purgatory I want no part of. With none of the flair of other racing sims out there, I can find no reason to recommend this game for anyone other that Formula-1-heads. In UbiSoft's library of gorgeous looking games, this stands out as the Plain Jane that no one wants to play with.

G 6 | C 5 | P 5 | M 5 | O 6 | **62**



Monaco GP
PlayStation
UbiSoft

Although the PlayStation version of *Monaco GP* is FAR superior than its Nintendo 64 counterpart, this game is still a long way from being able to compete with *Formula One*. Plus, there are turns that were 60-70mph turns in *F1*, but here, they're impossible over 20mph. The ease of setting up your car before each race deserves kudos, though it's not enough to save this one.

G 7 | C 6 | P 7 | M 8 | O 7 | **73**

Tennis is sorely lacking on the console but this is not the answer. Boring players, boring backgrounds and boring game modes (unless you consider Bomb tennis a real hoot) make All Star Tennis– you guessed it– boring. The play mechanics are above average, but they fail to compensate for the other subpar areas. Tennis is still sorely lacking on the console.

G 6 | C 7 | P 7 | M 4 | O 4 | **64**

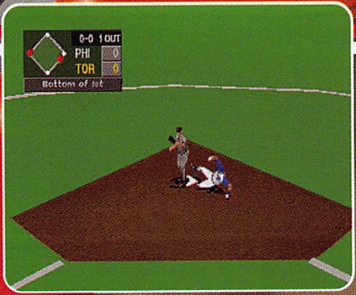


All Star Tennis
Nintendo 64
UbiSoft

Whoa... Another rare appearance by everyone's favorite dango, I've been waiting forever for a great tennis game and this ain't it. Playing tennis while avoiding bombs is something I expect from a *Bomberman* title. Graphics aside, this game offers nothing better that hasn't been seen before in a tennis game. And since when does Michael Chang have a one-handed backhand?

G 7 | C 6 | P 7 | M 4 | O 4 | **68**

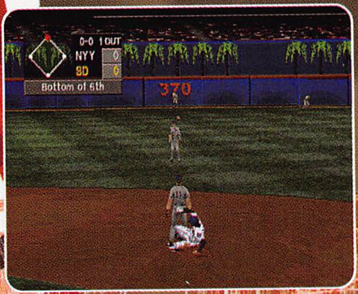
Baseball 2000











PlayStation

Developer: Interplay
Publisher: Interplay

Available: Now
of Players: 1-2

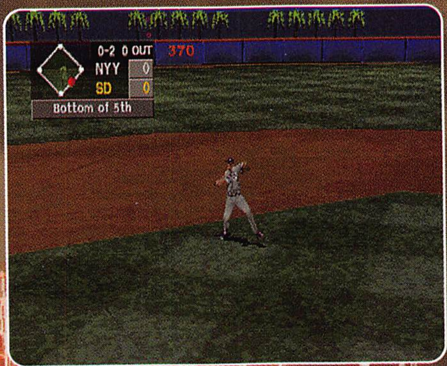
R Review

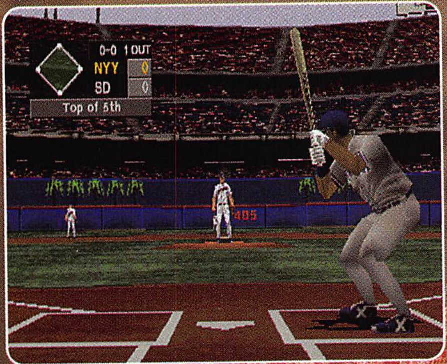
For the past two years, Interplay's baseball sim (formerly *VR Baseball*) was my go-to game. It had an acute knowledge of the sport, as well as great gameplay and lovely, lovely stats (oh stats... how I love thee). This year, *Baseball 2000* has made even more strides, continuing a solid, forward progression; which is more than I can say for some other franchises (ahem, *MLB*).

To reiterate *VR Baseball* reviews of the past, this game exemplifies what a great baseball simulation should be. There is plenty of managing to be done, the AI never falters and — hallelujah — the base-running is *actually* competent! There's something that certain baseball sims can't seem to get right (we won't mention who, though). Both the fielding and batter-pitcher interfaces are intuitive and remain the game's strongest points. The depth allows skilled players to excel, but won't leave beginners behind. Don't expect a homerun derby every game either; these pitchers throw much nastier stuff than you would expect, and the player stat profiles stay true to the real-life players (in other words, don't expect Joey Cora to make a run for the homerun title).

The problems that gamers had with the first two versions of this franchise were that it lacked the same audio and visual flair that made titles such as *Triple Play* and *MLB* more fetching. Well, both problems have been addressed, but with mixed results. The graphics are greatly improved, making it as easy on the eyes as any of the competition. The motion capture is good, the player models are seamless, and the frame-rate is nice and high. Then there is the sound. The first "talkie" for Interplay is only a marginal success. The upside is that *Baseball 2000* does have commentary, a facet sorely missing from previous titles. Unfortunately, the commentary doesn't sound all that good. The splicing of sentence fragments sounds disjointed, and the voice actor isn't believable. He always sounds excited and doesn't come off as being very authentic. There was a point, not too far into the game, when I wanted him to go away; I was beginning to miss the silence of *VR Baseballs* of the past. Almost as annoying as the soon-to-be-over-the-hill Olsen twins, although I miss their detective thrillers. Or even worse, that *Curly Sue*-wannabe "channeller" little girl from the Pepsi commercials (could Marlon Brando have sunk any lower?).

That is my only beef, though. Interplay still makes a damn good baseball sim. The interface, the statistical depth and gameplay are exemplary. Many of you might still balk at a title without the many bells and whistles of a *Triple Play*, but it is you who will be missing out. *Baseball 2000* deserves to be played. Now if they could just get that commentary right... **EN**





High Heat 2000

PlayStation

Developer: .366
Publisher: 3DO

Available: Now
of Players: 1-2

R Review

While the developer Team .366 fashioned their name after Ty Cobb's lifetime batting average (the MLB's highest ever), they're still batting .000 in the industry's "Show." *High Heat 2000* is another entry into the ever-thickening Book of Mediocrity which is choking the sports genre.

There is no one area of *High Heat* that stands out as being poor, but it fails to do a single innovative thing to separate itself from the growing pack of Johnny-Come-Latelies. With the exception of trademarking their own buzz word, TruPlay AI, there isn't a single facet of *High Heat 2000* that wasn't stamped with the same cookie cutter that has been utilized by every other baseball video game developer.

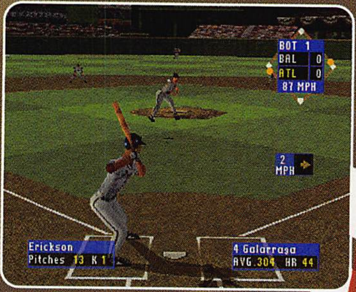
> **"...there isn't a single facet of *High Heat 2000* that wasn't stamped with the same cookie cutter..."**

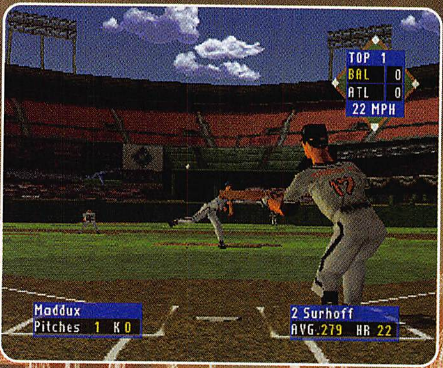
Let's see, you've got the 1999 updated rosters, using the '98 stats; there are five game modes (I bet you can't guess what those are); instant replays and a trade option. The TruPlay AI I mentioned earlier gives you such features as true-to-life (hence, the name) base-running, fielding, and managing... very novel. The play-by-play is solid, but the lack of a color man makes it pale in comparison to other baseball titles. *High Heat* boasts an "innovative" batter pitcher interface, but I fail to see the innovation; all I saw was me feasting on pitchers.

One cool extra is the inclusion of seven stadiums, aside from the standard 30, including the Brooklyn Dodgers' Ebbet's Field and Polo Grounds. Now you can relive baseball as it was played in some of the greatest fields in the history of the game... or you could play in the Astrodome. It would have been even better if they had gone and included some foreign stadiums, like from Japan or the Dominican Republic. That has yet to be done and would have gotten Team .366 some originality points. At least there's not a cornfield in... is there?

The upside to this homogenized, play-it-safe angle is that the gamer, who gets stuck with this under the Christmas tree or is left with no other options while surfing the rental shelves at the local Blockbuster, will find that it is competent enough in its fundamental grasp of the game to fill his hours. Unfortunately, anyone who has played baseball sims before will definitely get that been-there-done-that feeling, ultimately leading to the question, "Why *High Heat* over the other PlayStation baseball sims?" Why indeed. **EN**





3Xtreme









PlayStation — Review

Developer: 989 Studios | Available: Now
Publisher: 989 Studios | # of Players: 1-2

I've got a riddle for you: What has bad graphics, bad gameplay and one of the most worn-out licenses on the planet? Well, if the big title on the top of this review doesn't give it away, then you must be one of the brain dead gamers who actually fork out dough for this drivel. What frightens me the most, though, is that there must be droves of brain dead gamers out there, because this franchise is a big seller! I fear for the future of this country...

I really don't want to take a stroll down [bad] memory lane, but I must. The first installment of this "Do the Dew" extremer cash-run stunk up my PlayStation three years ago. Back then, it was fun for about three minutes — the time it took you to realize that there was no depth or semblance of gameplay.

Well, fast-forward to the present and slap me in the face with a frying pan, because I'm having a gnarly case of déjà vu. The graphics are scantly better; the gameplay is intact (aaargh!) and the license is so threadbare that a homeless person wouldn't wear it.

Play alone or with a friend, getting crazy on mountain bikes, skateboards and in-line skates. Perform a myriad of stunts, numbering over 250 and hit those gates for extra points. There are 17 tracks to play as well as hidden characters and equipment. Almost sounds convincing, doesn't it?

All of the extras (including the 17 corporate sponsors — since when is *that* a sell point?), in the world, don't make up for the crummy gameplay, which plagues this whole franchise. And, since they brought the comparison on themselves, I will add that *Street Sk8ter* is an infinitely more enjoyable experience, with fewer superfluous options thrown in to hide the lack of game depth.

3Xtreme is anything but. If you liked the first two, you will enjoy this (why, I have no idea), but for the Love of Pete, everyone else avoid this title! It isn't even worth a rental. **EN**

All-Star Tennis







Nintendo 64 — Review

Developer: Smart Dog | Available: Spring
Publisher: UbiSoft | # of Players: 1-2

Two years ago this title made a less than impressive debut on the PlayStation. The graphics were average, as were the play mechanics and features. There was no licensing, which wouldn't have been that big of an issue, if it weren't for the fact that the developers failed to use their artistic freedom in character creation. The players were so generic as to render the game completely forgettable.

Now there is an *All-Star Tennis* for the N64, and I'm wondering how to react. Do not confuse my listless attitude with a disinterest in the sport of tennis; it is one genre that is grossly misrepresented on the console and needs due justice. *All-Star Tennis*, while able to fill that void, simply doesn't have what it takes to supply that justice.

The motion capture and graphics seem incomplete. While the court and its players are above par, the crowd, line judges, and ball boys are as 2-dimensional as a Paulie Shore character. With such small environments to work with (it *is* just a tennis court) you'd think the whole area would be bustling with activity... or at least 3-dimensions. I'm going to attribute this to laziness.

This year's version is licensed but has few interesting players from the tour. Michael Chang is in there, as is Conchita Martinez, but with no Agassi, Courier or Hingis (or that Russian hottie that Sergei Federov is dating) the game still lacks personality.

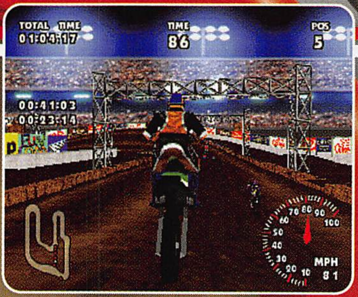
Playability has always been a problem for tennis titles, but *All-Star* does a pretty good job of overcoming the pitfalls. The racket contact area is fudged a bit, making volleying easier, and the backhands and dives are responsive enough to wrangle in those hard shots. It isn't as intuitive as I would have liked though, and there isn't enough depth to make it compelling.

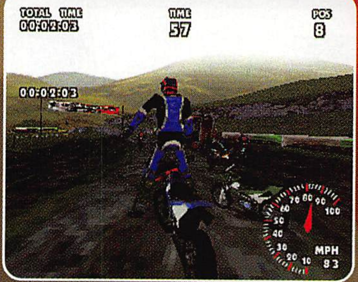
All-Star Tennis '99 can be best described as incomplete. Developers should have jettisoned the license and gone the route of an arcade-style game, with special shots, over-the-top secret characters, and some beefy tourneys. There's always next year, isn't there? **EN**

D.I.R.T.

Developer: Funcom
Publisher: TBA
Available: 3rd Qtr.
of Players: 1-2

P Preview











In one hand you've got a dirt bike game and in the other you've got a fistful of rusted old razorblades. Which one would I choose... Eggo, you still got that box of Band-Aids?

Ah, the life of a game mag editor — dedicated, shallow, and of course... willing to compromise. ECM: "FURY, I tell ya what, you preview *D.I.R.T.* and... I'll let you keep your job!" Ya see folks, I'm always willing to make compromises... nothing better than taking one for the team I always say, right?

OK, so perhaps dirt bike games aren't all that bad (who am I kidding?), but believe me, I've been in no rush to make a return to the genre. In fact not since the good ol' days of *Excitebike* on the NES have I played a good motocross game... isn't that hard to believe, is it (especially with the likes of *VMX Racing* running around)?

> **"...not since the good ol' days of *Excitebike* on the NES have I played a good motocross game..."**

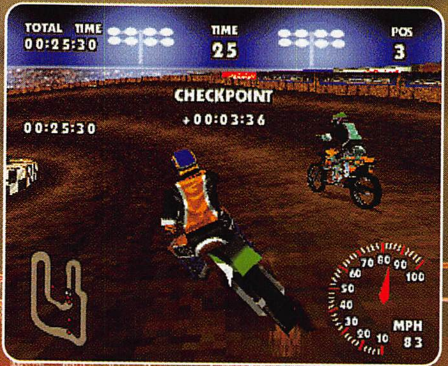
Then ECM throws *D.I.R.T.* at me, the new motocross game from Funcom's Ireland division. Somehow, in the midst of dodging car bombs these talented folks have actually managed to pull together a pretty interesting game, regardless of the genre. And, while it's true that I might not possess intimate knowledge of previous PlayStation dirt bike titles, I've got to say that *D.I.R.T.* is a really nice looking game.

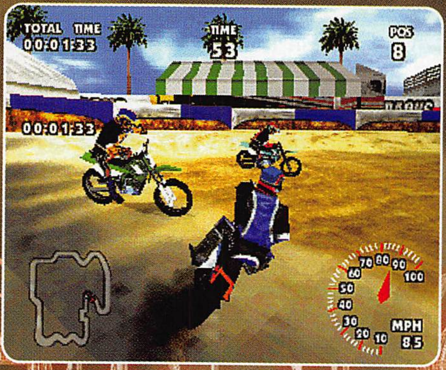
The graphics are sharp and, although a little blocky, look extremely smooth and colorful. The 3D engine also appears to have been finely tuned as it seems to run at a constant 30 frames with minimal amounts of pop-up. There are also a number of unique visual effects such as real-time bike-and-rider lighting and semi-realistic rider animation.

In all, there be will nine bikes to select from, including 125cc, 250cc, and a very man-style 500cc class. However, as the version I was playing was not complete, I found only the 125cc bike to respond properly. The tracks (at least 12) are also full of spectacular jumps and plenty of moguls on which to crash and burn (is that E. Storm I see?).

Now, when it comes to realism, I'm probably not the best judge. You see, I've never actually ridden a dirt bike, so as far as I can tell, *D.I.R.T.* is right on the money. Your rider can also pull off numerous stunts and modify his bike at the garage/repair shop.

Although I still find dirt bike games among the least exciting titles available (where did I put that copy of *Irritating Stick*?), I did find myself halfway interested in *D.I.R.T.* Get ready to stock up on the lava soap, *D.I.R.T.'s* headed for a third quarter release. **Fury**





Castrol Honda Racing











PlayStation

Developer: Interactive Ent. Available: May
Publisher: Electronic Arts # of Players: 1-2

R Review

While the PlayStation has seen almost every genre known to man covered in its vast library of games, one in particular has always been ignored... Superbike Racing. Electronic Arts, the producers of far too many games, has seen fit to rectify this sad situation with *Castrol Honda Superbike Racing*.

Although I prefer cars to motor bikes, I can't ignore how cool superbikes really are! They're extremely light, require very little gas, and are faster than most any exotic car on the market. The only setback — if you eat it going 150 mph on one of these "crotch rockets" you're toast... giving all new meaning to the phrase 'road rash.' Now, thanks to EA, you can drive like a speed demon and live long enough to tell the tale.

Perhaps the biggest name in super bike racing, the Castrol Honda team is used to making this insane sport look easy. Their weapon of choice: the Honda RC45 — capable of doin' 0 to 60 in 3.1 seconds. To give you an idea exactly how fast we're talking, the McLaren F1 (the world's fastest production car) can't hold a candle to speed like that.

Graphically, I just wish the game itself could deliver more of that sensation of speed. It suffers from an extremely poor frame-rate, which all but eliminates the illusion that you're travelling on one of the world's fastest race bikes. The environments also look far too bland to pry me from the likes of titles such as *Road Rash*, which was at least a colorful game.

Racers can test their stamina on 14 different circuits around the globe. Sadly, these tracks look far too similar to hold my interest. The only feature that really appealed to me was the ability to tune your gearbox using real data supplied by Castrol Honda's race engineers.

"If you're looking for a realistic super bike racer, *CHSBR* is your only choice..."

Halfway into the game, I was wishing EA had included a *Road Rash*-type combat mode, 'cause boredom was setting in big time! I'd love to praise the music, but... actually there is no in-game music. Wouldn't ya know it? This game's just hurtin' in all categories... so much for trying to impress consumers.

If you're looking for a realistic super bike racer, *CHSBR* is your only choice... Don't you just love variety? The PlayStation can do better... much better, and EA certainly knows it. With the PSY becoming more of a reality everyday, titles like these will soon be considered too "old school" for gamers to take notice any more. **F**





CIVILIZATION

CALL TO POWER



To be frank, I was scared as hell to pop this puppy into my PC. I remembered what Activision did to the PlayStation version of *Civ 2,* and I was expecting the worst; especially when I heard developers talking about "change" (a very dirty word when used with *Civ*).

While there *have* been a number of changes made to the minor details of the *Civilization* interface, the fundamental concepts and gameplay have remained intact. A couple of unfortunates did occur, like the mouse control and lengthy loads, but none of this is severe enough to ruin overall enjoyment... just frustrate you a bit.

Like in all *Civ* titles, the object in *Call To Power* is to build your nation into the dominant civilization. Unlike previous titles, *CTP* gives you three possible routes to take to the top. Not only can you wipe all others off the map in Bloodlust; or maintain the highest score through economic and military muscle; but now you can gain dominance by being the first to develop alien technology. An interesting little wrinkle is the possibility for total destruction, resulting from your experiments. Will your synthesized alien being be naughty or nice? Will the laboratory you are working in suddenly explode, causing mass devastation? You'll be playing with fire... and hopefully only your enemies will get burned.



While the changes to detail are too numerous to catalog, I will mention some of the more prevalent ones. For starters, the role of the settler has been drastically reduced. Now the responsibilities of the settler are city founding only. All land improvements are now handled by a city's public works. Each action, from farming to terra-forming, costs a certain number of public works (PW) points. The beauty of this is that you can develop multiple pieces of land simultaneously, and it only takes a turn or two.

Also added are fisheries, which act as sea-based farms. Now a coastal city can extract more food and raw material from the sea much earlier in the game. Also, forests and jungles produce more materials, making them more viable places to carve out a town.



Developer - Activision
Publisher - Activision
1-8 Players
Available Now
Viewpoint Score :88



Many new wonders are in *CTP* for the building. Unfortunately, developers, in an attempt to further individualize the game, have done away with all of the prior *Civ* wonders. This sucks, plain and simple. While it is cool to have some new ones, with different advantages, doing away with Leonardo's Workshop, the Great Wall, and the Statue of Liberty seem silly. Some may argue that this forces players to seek out new strategies to build their empire, but I think it detracts from the "makes sense" department.

I'll quickly mention that trade, building, and diplomacy have also changed... and for the better. Upon completion of a caravan, you now automatically create a trade route with any city you have knowledge of (i.e., you can see on the map); no more of that trudging across the continent stuff. Also, there is now a queue for construction, so you can avoid too much micro-management. Diplomacy has become much more intricate and difficult, forcing you to play it smart and pay attention. Those peace treaties don't come easy anymore...



There is no question that the game graphics are much better than *Civilization 2*. Unit and resource animations keep the screen bustling with activity, and the representations of farmed land, fisheries, and such all make for a visual treat. Some veterans will undoubtedly find fault with the new graphics because, admittedly, they are a little intrusive. Not quite as cluttered as *Alpha Centauri*'s, but nowhere near as subtle as *Civ 2*'s.

Unlike the graphics, the sound leaves much to be desired. Having been exposed to the incredible soundtrack accompanying *Civ 2: Gold Edition*, the *Kumbayah*-esque background sound here offers little environmental enhancement. After a while, you won't even know it's there.

Civ: Call To Power is a welcome addition to the exalted series. While it borders slightly on the complicated side, and the interface isn't nearly as user-friendly as *Civ 2*'s, fans will love the ability to further explore their civilization-building skills. People new to the series should avoid this title and start with *Civ 2*, because as Eggo has pointed out, there is too much going on [Eggo's note: I call it *Civ Centauri*]. I guess there never will be a game that is equal to *Civ 2*... <sigh> **El Niño**





Some things should never change...

Let's talk about war. You know you love it. *Civilization: Call To Power* has made some serious changes to the *Civ*-style of warfare (and not all for the better). For starters, multiple units can now attack in unison. Now you can bum-rush cities with entire legions of troops, downplaying the unfair advantage *Civ 2* cities had. No longer can a couple of pikemen, hiding behind a wall, wipe out entire attacking forces. If you've got the numbers, that city will fall... Also, there are now ranged weapon attacks, so building that archer or cannon will give you a solid advantage, as well as add a new level of strategy. The downside is the battle screen, which takes on a whole new level of lame. Loading into and out of this screen is tedious, and the battles are about as visually stimulating as *Stratego*. Just keep this option turned off and you'll be all right.

GameFan Exclusive Interview with producer of DOA2, Mr. Tomonobu Itagaki!!!

Our ace international correspondent, MetalJack, recently had the exclusive opportunity to sit down with the producer of *Dead or Alive 2*, Tomonobu Itagaki, and discuss his current project, state of a DC port, and even some info on a new *Ninja Gaiden* title destined for consoles. Without further ado, take it away, MetalJack:

GF: Hello, Mr. Itagaki, thank you for taking some time with us on this little interview. First of all, in the AOU show footage, on the waterfall stage, we saw the character push the opponent off a cliff into a pool below the waterfall. Does every stage have something like this?

TI: Yes, aside from the waterfall stage, we have several different kinds prepared as part of our real-time environment in each of the stages. This will allow the player to have control in real time, with no break in gameplay.

GF: The original *DOA* featured a "Danger Zone" setup outside the arena. Does *DOA2* have this feature as well?

TI: The "Danger Zone" is part of our game system, but that is not the only main feature in *DOA2*.

GF: I see... we saw a blonde woman on the elevator scene in some footage during the Amusement Showcase International '99; is she one of the new characters?

TI: Yes, her name is Helena. She is the 11th character in *DOA2*. That elevator scene is part of a movie sequence (real-time) that the player will see when Helena is chosen as the main character.

GF: How does the tag match system work?

TI: The tag match system will probably be the most innovative fighting game feature in '99. The system we are integrating will probably eventually become a standard for all tag-match systems. It will not be as simple as setting up a special button for switching characters.

GF: That sounds very promising. By the way, we heard that the game only uses one NAOMI board, is this true?

TI: Yes, we are only using one NAOMI board.

GF: It may be premature to ask you this question, but has the development for a Dreamcast version begun?

TI: Tecmo is still considering DC development at this point so I am not in a position to comment further at this point.

GF: Do you have any other games in development for the arcades? Will you be using the NAOMI board heavily in the future?

TI: I can't mention any titles yet, but we would like to actively use the NAOMI board for our future arcade titles.

GF: What do you think of the next PlayStation?

TI: As with the Dreamcast, Tecmo is still considering development for the PS2. So I can't comment on that either.

GF: Tecmo's English website recently had a survey asking if fans would be interested in a new *Ninja Gaiden* game. I heard that the results were very positive. What do you think? Is a new *Ninja Gaiden* a possibility? GameFan is very excited about it; we're all big fans!

TI: We've heard that a lot of fans in America are excited about it. We are currently in talks with the management for consideration. Suffice to say, there shouldn't be any technical difficulties. Based on our latest action game oriented technology used in *DOA*, we believe we can deliver the best product (ECM's Note: <gasp>, DC *Ninja Gaiden*...dare to dream!).

GF: Thank you very much. We are looking forward to see *DOA2* in the arcades upon completion! Good luck with the development!

Special thanks to Mr. Tsutsumi of Tecmo for setting up this interview.

Dragon Quest VIII demo on Planet Laika?

Gamers may actually get to experience a bit of *Dragon Quest VII* on their PlayStation as early as this summer. A playable demo of *Dragon Quest VII* may be included in Quintet's upcoming RPG *Planet Laika*, which is slated for a summer release in Japan.

***Persona 2* to have two chapters?**

The sequel to Atlus' popular RPG, *Persona*, may actually be the first of two chapters, according to rumors in Japan. The second chapter, rumored to be titled *Persona 2: Punishment*) is supposedly in development and will be making its way to this continent later this fall. Meanwhile, *Persona 2: Sin* is currently scheduled for a June 24 release in Japan.

From Software Makes Some Additions to the Family

Though they are currently busy wrapping up *Frame Gride* on Dreamcast, From Software has also leaked plans to add *King's Field 4* and *Armored Core 2* to their growing line-up of titles — more next issue.

Japan

Tidbits, Rumors, and Hot Info

Capcom's monthly adventure

Capcom will be releasing a new adventure game for the Sony PlayStation tentatively called *Adventure Next Wave* every month. The first release will include 3 chapters: *Kyuuko and the King of Thousand Devils, Tank Squadron Goes East* and one which is untitled at the moment.

Sequels already?!

Rumors state that *Aero Dancing 2* and *Shutokou Battle 2* for the Dreamcast are already in the early stages of production.

Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram update

Sega is currently hard at work with the Dreamcast version of *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*. They are attempting to get the game to run at a solid 60fps. It is scheduled for a release this year. Rumors further state (take this with large amounts of salt) that Sega is re-working to include "more than 2 player support."

Hideo Kojima working on a Dreamcast title

The creator of *Metal Gear Solid*, Hideo Kojima is currently involved in a Dreamcast title. According to rumors in Japan, it is either a new *Metal Gear* title or the upcoming RPG, *Reiselied*.

Metal Gear Solid Integral

Konami is currently planning to release an upgrade to their current Metal Gear Solid game entitled Metal Gear Solid Integral. The game will span three CD-ROMs. The first two will be the main game, and one new disk will feature a VR training mode with 300 levels. Konami is also planning these features:

- Japanese or English subtitling
- Adjustable difficulty level
- A photo session event with Naomi and other characters
- A mini-game for the Pocket Station
- New controls and weapon adjustments
- Behind the scenes with the development staff
- Trailers of upcoming events in the game
- Costume changes
- New enemy locations after finishing the game in certain conditions

Metal Gear Solid Integral will be released on July 1st in Japan, at a price of 4990yen.

Namco Announces Format for First PSY Title

Namco has announced that their first PSY title will be using the traditional PlayStation CD-ROM media format instead of the custom PSY DVD-ROM format. This comes as

a surprise move, and leaves one wondering what exactly this first title will be, considering it will not take full advantage of the PSY's storage space.

Namco has commented that the reason behind their use of the CD-ROM format is so that they can convert the game for the PlayStation easily in case the PSY release would be delayed further.

Will other developers follow the same route? Will this lessen the impact of Sony's launch? We'll have to wait and see. This is certainly an interesting development.

Preview: Koudelka

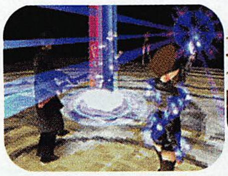
Sacnoth is currently working on an RPG for the Sony PlayStation called *Koudelka*. For those of you who have not heard of the





software company, I don't blame you. Sacnoth is one of the new and promising software companies formed by several former Square staff members. The game will use 3D polygon models for the characters and monsters on a 2D pre-rendered, CG background.

The story takes place in a monastery in England during the late 19th century. The





player has control over three characters: a female gypsy, Koudelka Iasant; a wanderer, Edward Plunkett; and a priest by the name of James O'Flaherty.

Using several different items and small tools, players will have to avoid traps, fight monsters, and rescue people. In addition,











using each character's special abilities, players can unravel secrets and mysteries as the game progresses. The map will be



limited to within the monastery but more than one event may occur at the same spot depending on what the character does.

The CG movie sequences we have seen so far are very well done. As Koudelka speaks, her lip movements go along with her dialogue. Not even Square or Namco



have that much detail in their movies. The game is still currently in development, and Sacnoth has not given us official word when it will be released. But we are already very excited about it!



Capcom's new adventure Onimusha

Replace guns with katanas, zombies with samurai, mix for 60 seconds and what do you get? Capcom's *Onimusha*. *Onimusha* is the latest action adventure game for the Sony PlayStation from Capcom. The game will have 3D polygon models for the characters with 2D pre-rendered background a la *Biohazard/Resident Evil*. The game is set during the feudal era in Japan. The player will control a samurai warrior by the name of Akechi Samanosuke, and must rescue a princess, Yukihime, from the samurai army led by the infamous Oda Nobunaga.



The scenario will be written by Capcom's very own Flagship. Flagship has been responsible for the script of *Biohazard 2*, and is currently writing additional scenario for the Nintendo 64 version of *Biohazard 2*. Popular Japanese actor, Takeshi Kaneshiro will be the model for the Akechi Samanosuke character. His voice, facial expression, and motion capture will be used. The Japanese Philharmonic Orchestra led by Mamoru Samurakouchi will be responsible for the music. He has worked as music director for *Biohazard Director's Cut Dual Shock Version*.



Along with *Dino Crisis*, Capcom has half a dozen games of the same genre in development (if it isn't broke...). The release date for *Onimusha* has not been announced yet. Stay tuned.



"Hi, my name is Voldo, one of the happy miscreants reprising my role as the blind gimp-monkey in the upcoming DC port of *Soul Calibur*."

Look for more on Namco's first of many (hopefully!) Dreamcast projects next issue, along with a legion of other DC exclusives including *Blades of Vengeance* and *Star Trek: New Worlds*.

COMING SOON

Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon

Import

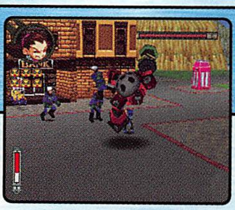
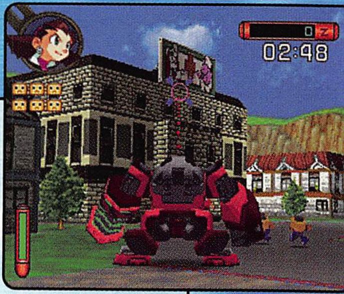






Dino Crisis (Capcom) — Resident Evil done Jurassic style! Here are some even NEWER shots of this awesome action game. With lifelike dinosaurs and some awesome weaponry, look for a full import preview of this game next issue.



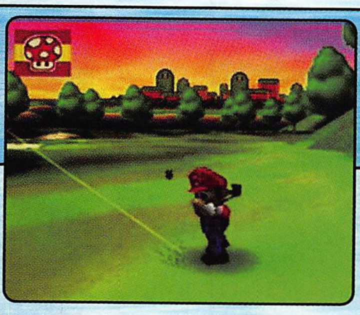
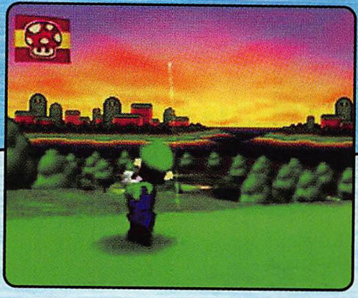
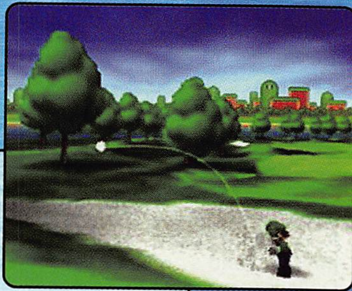
Rockman Dash: Toron Ni Kobun (Capcom) — Well, it's not exactly another MegMan game. Taking place in the MegaMan universe, this time you play as the baddies of MegaMan and what else do baddies do but DESTROY EVERYTHING! Sounds cool to me!



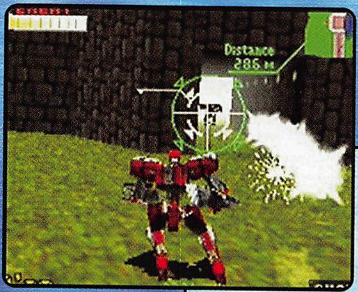
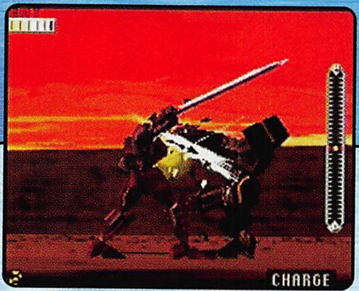


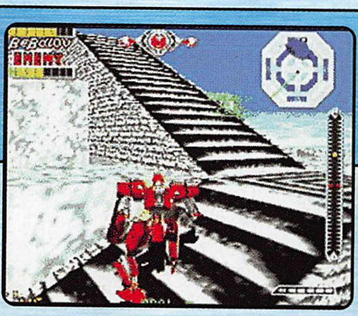


Macross VFX2 (Bandai Visual) — While the first one bit the big one, VFX2 looks like it could be a winner. Better controls, and improved gameplay mechanics, combined with 2D anime cutscenes, VFX2 looks to prove that Macross games can be good.

Mario Golf (Nintendo) — Ahhh... golf is such an easy-going game. And now, Mario and gang take out their woods and tee up on the greens. Look for this title next month.

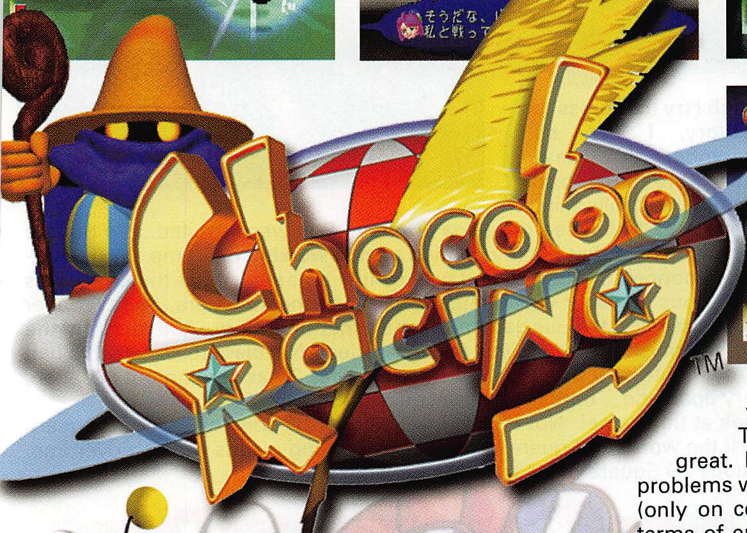



Last Legion UX (Yukes) — Sure, PSX might have Armored Core and the DC might have Frame Gride, but man, Last Legion UX might outdo all of them. Mech action/adventure glory for the N64!






Chocobo Racing™





Easy to mock, even easier to write off as a clone, but hard to put down, Square's latest racing game is poised to peck the eyes out of the competition like an angry chocobo. Definitely a niche title, *Chocobo Racing* will appeal to three types of gamers: Square worshippers, *Mario Kart* fans, and young casual gamers. Like *Bomberman Fantasy Race* (the only competition this game has on the PlayStation), *Chocobo Racing* is a fun, cutesy racer very similar to the immortal *Mario Kart* on the SNES.

The 'gimmick' behind this title is the cast of characters, whom previously appeared in *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon 2* and are staples from the *Final Fantasy* universe (e.g., Black and White Magic users, Behemoth, Chocobo, Mog, Bahamut, and Cid).

CR's Story Mode unlocks a new character every time you complete it. So far, we've discovered 10 hidden characters, all of which were in previous Square games. Aya Brea from *Parasite Eve*, a first generation chocobo (the 8-bit ancestor), and a cactrot are just a few secrets you can look forward to unlocking.

The game's engine is not that great. It moves pretty fast, but also has problems with pop-up and texture warping (only on certain tracks). What it lacks in terms of engine, though, *Chocobo Racing* makes up for with fun. Expect a lot of laughs and gameplay that's just like *Mario Kart*... on the PlayStation.

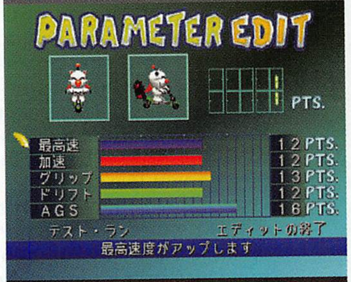
In addition to selecting a unique character, you can choose a special ability such as: Dash, Bundoru (Steal/Mug), or Barrier. This ability is available when the meter at the top of the screen fills. In addition to this, there are power-ups which you can drive over (e.g., Fire, Ice, Lightning, Death Sentence, and Mini) and make more powerful by collecting more of the same type. There's also plenty of strategy involved in deciding which power-up to save, use, or steal at any given time. Fortunately, the game doesn't suffer from rubber band AI — where most attacks continually harass the leader, so you're safer being in 2nd place.

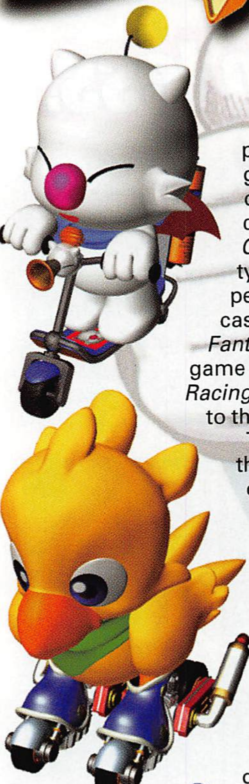
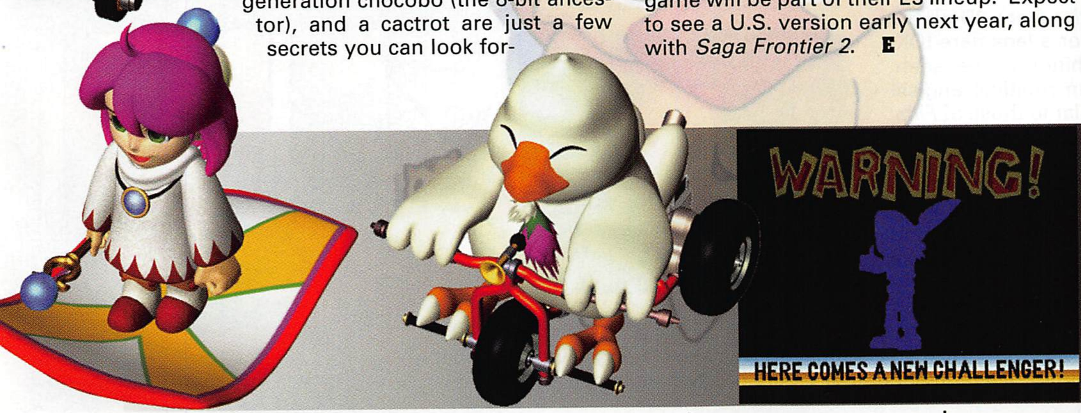
Even though the Story Mode adds replay value, you do most of that unlocking in a single day's time. If you're not into two-player split-screen racing, then you should probably rent *Chocobo's Racing* before buying. Still, I had more fun getting through the repetitious Story Mode in this game than I did playing *Ridge Racer Type 4* over and over to unlock cars.

Lastly, Square EA just announced this game will be part of their E3 lineup. Expect to see a U.S. version early next year, along with *Saga Frontier 2*. E

Hidden Racers!

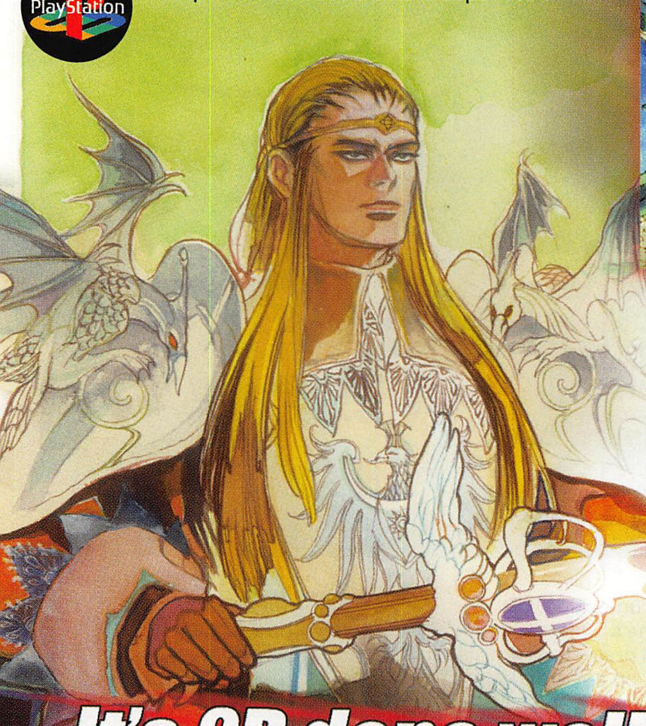
"If you come here... You'll find me." Every time you finish Story Mode, a score is given to evaluate your performance. You'll then take that score and distribute the points among the stats of a custom character which you create and save to memory card. The second time you finish Story Mode, a mysterious stranger will challenge you... it's Squall from *FF8*! Race him on the special *Final Fantasy VIII* track (Galbadia Garden), cruising to the tunes of *FF8's* battle music. It's a tough race, but once you beat Squall, he's selectable (along with the new track and his Gunblade special attack!).

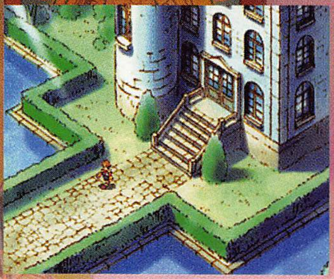


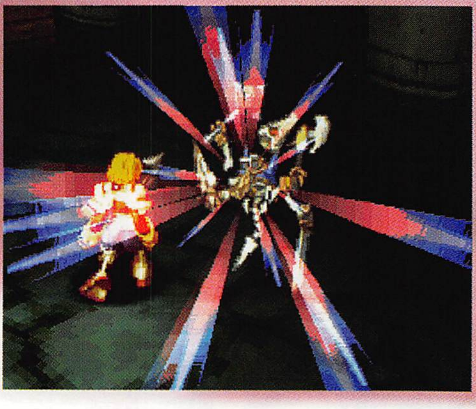





This preview is based off the Japanese final.





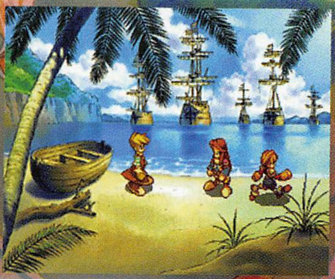


Though I try to repress the memory, I can still remember that day... The skies were blue, birds were singing, I strolled into the office, and ECM handed me *Saga Frontier*. Boy was I excited... "a Square RPG" — three words that get my gaming glands working overtime. With shaking hands, I popped in the disc and was simply amazed. What the &@*! was this? A hideous dinosaur which must've escaped the 16-bit era, *Saga Frontier* had terrible graphics, tedious gameplay, and a marginal story. And this from the makers of the much-heralded *Final Fantasy* series? Needless to say, it left a bad taste in my mouth. So when I heard *Saga Frontier 2* was coming out in Japan, I was very apathetic... until I saw the screenshots.

Just **look** at this game! Not only is it 2D, but it's 2D done well... from Square no less. If the words "a Square RPG" got my gaming glands working overtime, "a gorgeous 2D Square RPG" has me drowning in saliva.

It's 2D done well... from Square no less.









In the past, I've hopped on the soapbox and 'cried foul' about the death of 2D games. However recently, it looks like 2D gaming isn't quite dead, so I can get off the box... at least until someone mentions 'gameplay.' Anyway, *Saga Frontier 2* is much more than just a sequel to *Saga Frontier*. It's an omen of potential greatness to come. Because the Japanese version of *Saga Frontier 2* didn't come alone, it was packaged with a playable demo of *Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana*. That's right, the next chapter in the *Seiken Densetsu* series is coming, and get this — it's 2D and better looking than *SF2*! But more on that later...





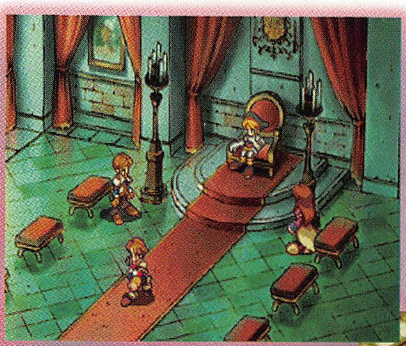
The graphics in *Saga Frontier 2* are 2D all the way; not a hint of a polygon or a lens flare (OK, maybe a tiny ray of sunshine) to be seen. Character sprites (drawn from multiple angles) walk on 2D backgrounds, similar to those of *Final Fantasy VII*. And much of the gameplay in towns is similar to *FF7*: exploring the luscious environs... in search of the door. But getting back to the graphics, this game is such a fine example of hand-drawn craftsmanship that, for a second, it made me forget the visual delights of Sega's Dreamcast. Call me crazy, but I think this game (and *SD:LoM*) can hang with Sega's 128-bitter in terms of visuals; that's saying a lot for a system that's only 32-bit.





The previous *Saga Frontier* had seven main characters and was like playing seven mini-RPGs, each 10-20 hours long. Well, *Saga Frontier 2* only has two main charac-

EGGO: DELIVER US TO THE PROMISED LAND... | DEVELOPER - SQUARESOFT PUBLISHER - SQUARESOFT | 1 PLAYER AVAILABLE EARLY 2000









ters. I hope you weren't a big fan of that 'playing through the same story multiple times' gameplay of the first, because it's gone. There are only two characters to choose from in *SF2*, which is a good thing since it should cut down the repetition factor of the script.

Battles are like *SF1*, with large groups involved in random skirmishes. Encounters can also be seen and avoided in dungeons with a skillful sidestep or juke. However, I wouldn't run from too many fights, because leveling up is nec-





essary, much like an old-school RPG. Characters also 'invent' new fighting techniques over time, which is always interesting — waiting for the next attack to be devised. It's almost like researching a new skill, which beats the ol' "Attack," "Attack," and lemme guess... "Attack" syndrome of standard RPGs.

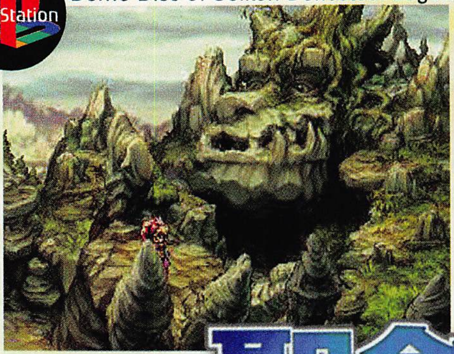
Square EA just announced that they'll be bringing this game to the U.S., and it will be showcased as part of their E3 lineup. Unfortunately, it won't hit store shelves until early next year. By then you should be done with *Final Fantasy VIII*. E



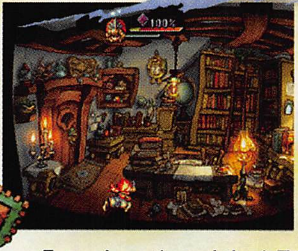
SaGa Frontier 2

SaGa FRONTIER™ II

Demo Disc of Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana included with SaGa Frontier 2!




聖剣伝説® LEGEND OF MANA



Ever since the original *Tobal* came out in Japan, Square has made popular the idea of packaging new games with playable previews of upcoming titles. *Tobal* had *Final Fantasy VII*, *Brave Fencer* had *Final Fantasy VIII*, and now *Saga Frontier 2* has *Seiken Densetsu Legend of Mana*. Since neither *Saga Frontier 2* nor *Legend of Mana* has been announced for a U.S. release yet, you're probably wondering why we're previewing both games.

But first, a little history... A few months back, I read that Square was going to revive an old series of theirs this year, and it would rock the RPG world. While it isn't the much sought-after *Chrono Trigger 2*, the game they were talking about *is Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana*. The *Seiken Densetsu* series was very popular in Japan, with games appearing on the GameBoy and Super Famicom; while the only game we got Stateside was *Secret of Mana* on the Super NES.

Chances are, if you're reading this magazine and owned a Super NES, then you played *Secret of Mana*. Well, after seeing the Japanese screenshots and playing the demo disc, I can safely say this is **the** Square RPG to look forward to this year (in Japan). Though it's crazy to say this, I consider this Square's reply to Enix's *Dragon Quest VII*, the only RPG series that can hang with *Final Fantasy* in Japan.

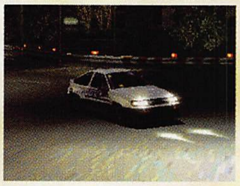
Anyway, this game's got it all: stellar 2D graphics, fantastic characters, incredible artwork, and, for once... awesome music! Prepare to lose sleep over this one. Unfortunately, it's still a little early to hope for a U.S. release; there's been no announcement yet from Square EA. But when the game looks this promising, it's just a matter of time... right?



SQUARE'S PREVIEW 4

Racing Lagoon





Oh yeah, the other game that came on Square's Preview Volume 4 disc was *Racing Lagoon*, the first, and quite possibly last, Square Driving RPG you'll ever see. Picture this... the Square brain-trust is sitting around thinking how good their RPGs are. So what better way to make a successful Square game than to take a popular genre, and add RPG elements to it. If it worked for *Tobal* (a fighting game)... why not a racing game? Besides, who wouldn't shell out a few bucks for *Final Turismo*? So here we are with *Racing Lagoon*, a driving game with story. In the playable, the car's control was not good (no grip)... though this could be because it's the first car available and you have to earn the better vehicles.



DEVELOPER - SQUARESOFT
PUBLISHER - SQUARESOFT
1 PLAYER
AVAILABLE SOMEDAY (WE HOPE)



How do you top a hip-hop dog, a kung-fu onion, and some of the most creative raps heard from that side of the Pacific? Well... you can't. It's nearly impossible to better a game as trend-setting, clever, and novel as the first *Parappa the Rapper*.

Instead, what SCEI did was bring back the more popular characters from the last game: Chop Chop Master Onion, Joe Chin, Jet Baby, the bully and his Yes-man ("Shcram!"... "Yeah!"), and of course Parappa. They also kept that same wacky humor, created a bunch of new characters (Lammy the lamb, Cathy Piller, and Paul 'the wood' Chuck, to name a few), wrote seven new songs, and threw in a two-player mode for replay value.

UmJammer Lammy's songs just aren't as good as *Parappa's*. They're not as clever or original, but they do have that toe-tapping catchiness which lets them bury themselves deep in your head for up to 24 hours. At least Lammy's guitar sounds a lot better than Parappa's rapping. Because try as you might to get the timing down in the last game, his rhymes just wouldn't sound right — Frog: "In the rain or in the snow, I got the funky flow..." Parappa: "In ... r, rain... in, in... I got fun, flow... oh oh..." Thankfully, that broken rapping has been replaced by a singing guitar. Instead of words, Lammy speaks with riffs during the songs, thus making *Lammy* a smoother sounding game than *Parappa the Rapper*.

Once you finish the seven levels in the game, you unlock the ability to play as Rammy (Lammy's evil twin), and Parappa. When you play as Parappa, the key commands and lyrics of the song change, and he performs his trademark broken rap ("May I help you?"). He's also much harder to play after you've gotten used to the silky smooth sounds of Lammy's electric guitar (but at least Parappa can still improvise extra rhymes — "k, k, kick, punch, block, block, bl, block...").

The way the multi-player works is you can pair Lammy & Rammy or Lammy & Parappa in a co-operative rap or a versus rap-off... And while this mode is designed to add to the game's staying power, I'd rather play *Bust-A-Groove* if I'm going to compete with a friend. Still, *UmJammer Lammy* is a better solo experience. Compared to the original, Lammy isn't as good, but it's still miles ahead of the competition (except *Bust-A-Groove*), and is worth a purchase. E

UmJammerLammy™

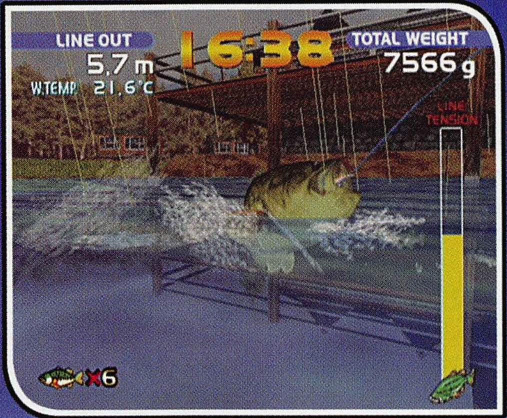


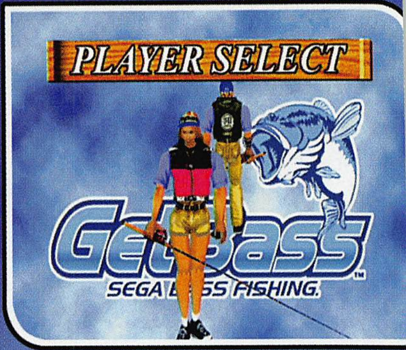


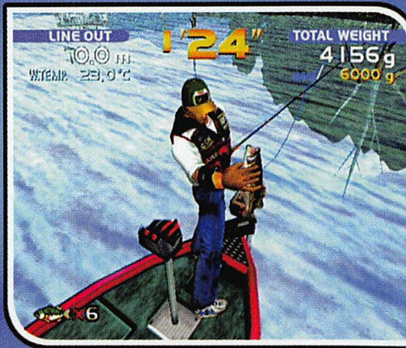
Cherished Memories

Ah, the memories. Heading out for a long day of fishing with Dad. Sunlight playing off the pristine lake, laughter filling the air. Motoring out onto the lake and catching our fill of fish; skipping rocks as twilight descended; enveloping us in cool air. A magical ride home, planning how we'd regale Mom with tales of the fish we caught, and the 'ones that got away.' Yes, that was a time to cherish and something to remember forever...

Of course nothing like that ever happened to me. No, fishing trips with my Dad more resembled something straight out of the twisted mind of horror savant, Clive Barker. Invariably, any number of things would go terribly wrong, including (but not limited to): 1.) Dad getting a fish hook caught in his finger which, incidentally, was highly reminiscent of the closing minutes of *Hellraiser 2* coupled with some of the more classic, expletive-ridden scenes featured prominently in *Goodfellas*, 2.) an Oscar-nominated role as breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a mosquito family numbering in the tens of thousands, or 3.) if I was really lucky, on the rare occasions when deep sea fishing was involved, 'chumming' the water with my own special gastric concoction (usually a brackish mixture of Coca-Cola, Twinkies, and Dramamine, mmmm...). Naturally, we never, ever caught anything (well, nothing that you could properly term a 'fish'). But now is my chance (and yours) to 'relive' those memories you never had with Sega's latest Model 3 port, *Get Bass!*



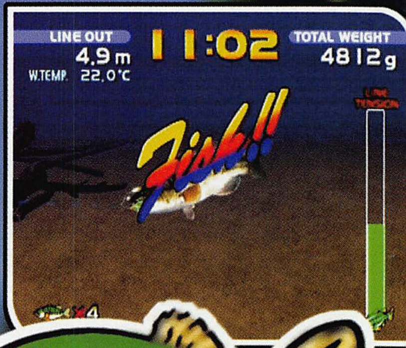




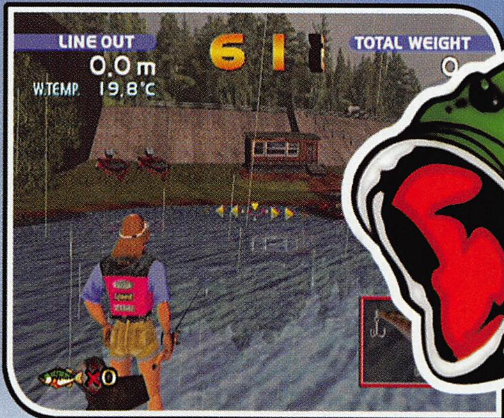


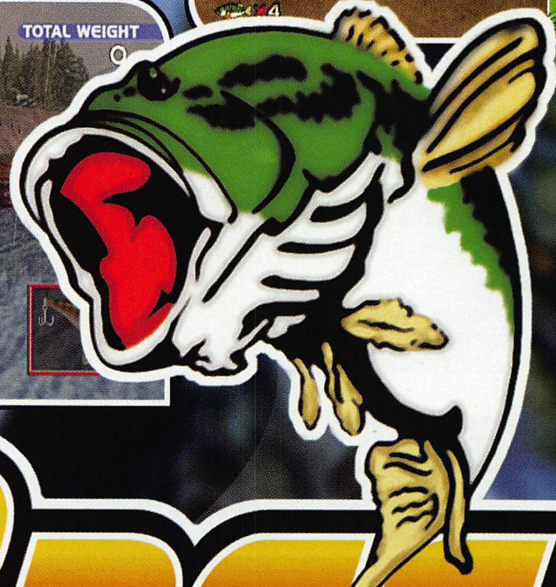
Fishin' 101

Obviously the goal in *Get Bass!* is to catch fish — lots of 'em; bass, to be exact. As with the arcade edition, there's a certain time limit in which you must catch a certain amount of fish (determined by weight). Lucky import buyers will note that the game displays weight in grams, not pounds, so all the metric-illiterate out there can go invest in some slide rules and abacus' to aid in the conversion process (Waka's head nearly exploded trying to do the math... not a pretty sight). Control is managed through expert (or not-so-expert if you're Eggo... the only fishin' this boy has ever done is





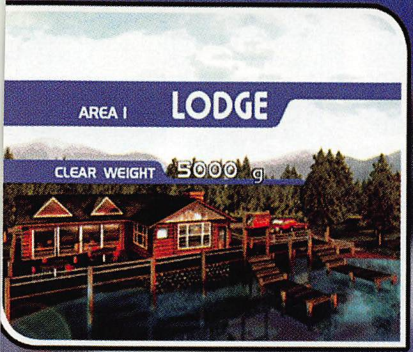




GetBass
SEGA BASS FISHING.



ECM: Here's hookin' at you, kid... ‹argh› | Developer - Sega | Publisher - Sega | 1 Player | Available Now Japan | Viewpoint Score: 83





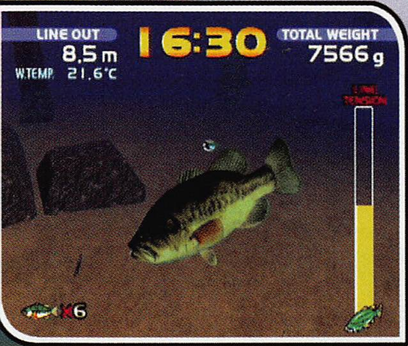


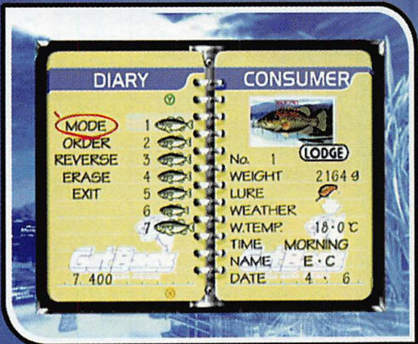
in the frozen food section of the supermarket for some Gortons fish sticks) manipulation of the handy rod controller that is conveniently packed in. Depending on the fish, the control will vibrate more violently, the larger the haul. It doesn't give the same visceral thrill as tugging on the line in the arcade rev (nearly yanking it out of the machine was always fun), but you'll know it when you bag a big one.

Along with the 'Time Attack' style of gameplay that comes with being an arcade port, *GB!* also features a "Consumer Mode." This essentially extends the life of the game immeasurably by adding a whole roster of anglers in a fish-off to the bitter end. Featuring morning, noon, and night fishing, he who catches the most fish (determined by weight, naturally) wins. Naturally the fish react quite differently depending on the time of day (at breakfast time, they're especially ravenous). Think of it as a 'season mode' such as you might find in any number of sports games.

There was one slight problem with the gameplay: slowdown, anyone? It rears its ugly head at some very inopportune points. Case in point: I'm leading a massive bass (one that Jaws would think twice about tangling with) at just the right pace. A reel here, a tug there, and I think to myself, "just one more little twitch of the line, and he's mine!" and just as I execute the last tug on the line, the game slows down, screws up the timing, and Mr. Bass makes a bee-line for the deepest part of the lake. Talk about the one that got away... <ugh> If the 'rod' actually had a rod, it would have been kindling after the first two hours. However, I persevered, and once you come to grips with the erratic bouts of slowdown, it becomes quite enjoyable (if a little erratic).

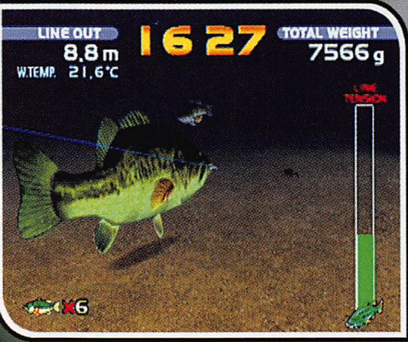






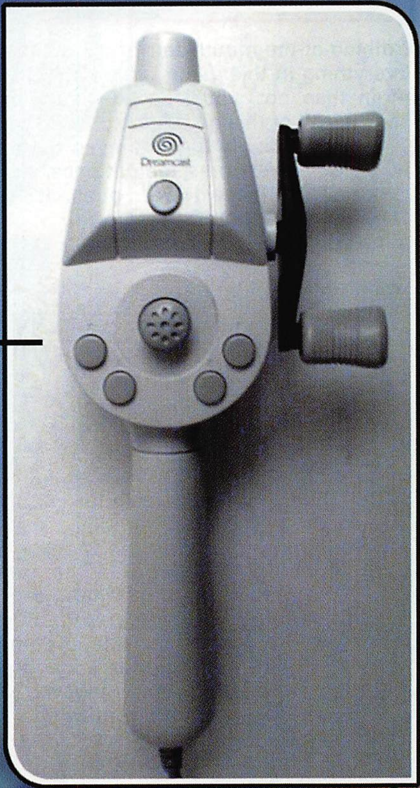
Catch of the Day... or the One That Got Away?

Graphically, this is the Model 3 edition, minus the aforementioned slowdown and some irritating clipping problems. At times, fish will swim right through each other, completely shattering an otherwise great day on the lake (in other words, kiss suspension of disbelief goodbye). Unfortunately I'm gonna chalk this one up to a rush job, much as was the case with a lot of the clipping and z-buffering problems in *Sonic Adventure.* When is Sega gonna learn that it's not how fast you get it done, but how well you do it...(at least that's what my lady friends tell me) [Eggo's note: ECM... and lady friends? When did this happen?]. All in all a solid job, but still rushed...



Reel 'Em In!

Get Bass! is fun. Sure, you and your friends may scoff at first, but plunk down for a little quality time with this one and you'll be hooked as the game reels you in for some serious angling action (special, painful thanks to Reubus for the tons o' puns...<ack>). **ECM**



Yet another Sega toy...

If nothing else, Sega's Dreamcast may go down in history as the console with the single largest collection of 'necessary' peripherals. Thanks in part to some questionable game pad design, you need the Arcade Stick to play fighting games; for House of the Dead 2, naturally you need a gun or two; and for Get Bass, there's no way you're gonna enjoy it without the fishing 'rod' by ASCII. Since Sega seems to be going for ultimate realism here, I propose a couple of more add-ons for Get Bass, to complete the experience. How 'bout the Virtua Cooler (for various and sundry beverages, beer included) and the Virtua Mosquito-In-Your-Ear (it wouldn't be a day at the lake without half a million of these blood sucking fiends nipping at your flesh).



Living in the Past

Throughout my tenure at *GameFan*, a large number of readers have commented on how I'm "always trying to relive my teenage years," or offered such valuable insight as "Forget it nimrod, 2D is dead," in subtle reference to my stubborn refusal to let 2D games go silently into the still, dark night (usually accompanied by wild fits of hyperbole, and soap box waxing). And when I say '2D', I mean games stocked to the gills with parallax, sprites, and 2D 'effects' (line scrolling, rotation, scaling et al), not the legion of 2.5D games that made their way to 32-bit in more recent times. The gamer that still loves and respects such things is a dying breed — make no mistake about that. However, it doesn't mean we don't get something of a taste of the golden nectar on which we were weaned from time to time. Case in point: Capcom simply refuses to let go of 2D graphics. Sure, they dabble in 3D from time to time, but you can tell there's no emotion in it; farming the lion's share of 3D titles out to someone like Arika speaks volumes (minus, naturally, the cash cow that is the *Resident Evil* series). The simple point is, Capcom knows what the gamer wants. And with that '2D gamer friendly' outlook comes the first 2D shocker on Dreamcast: *Marvel vs. Capcom*.

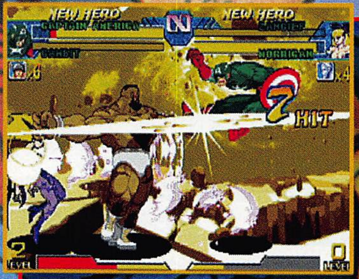






If a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words...

...then a series of incredible pictures strung together must be worth their weight in RAM. And what a series it is. *Marvel vs. Capcom* features the most animation **ever** seen in any 2D fighting game — nothing prior to this can hold even a sputtering candle to the excruciating number of **hand-drawn** images that make up this graphical benchmark. And that's exactly what this is for a home console: Any doubts that were fostered about how well the DC could handle 2D titles have received a bone-shattering axe kick directly to the skull — the level of animation in this game is so completely awe-inspiring that top-of-the-line animated films are its only rival.







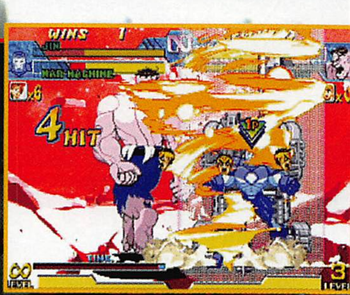


Whether it's Strider's scarf-cum-mask fluttering resplendently in the 'breeze', the vile spittle bathing Venom's tongue or Gambit's trench coat flowing majestically behind him, the animation in *MvC* is flawless. If you're a frothing-at-the-mouth fan of 2D art then you've come to the right place. Everything in this game is animated to such a level of detail that, more often than not, you'll be awestruck by the madness occurring on screen. All of this on brand-spankin' new hardware.

Most shockingly (beyond even the mind-bending animation), even with four players on-screen at once, all executing multiple supers, there is not a hint of slowdown... at all. It's truly a testament to both the DC hardware and Capcom's programming prowess.





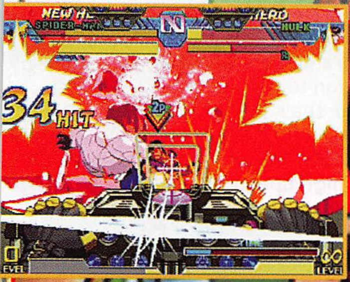


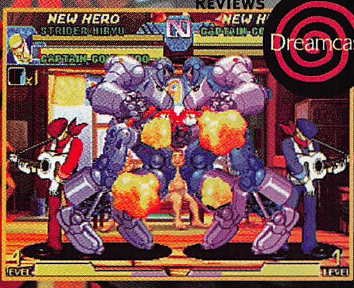
Capcom Vs. The Rest

There are, typically, three types of fighting game players: the *Tekken* player; the *Virtua Fighter* player; and the Capcom player (SNK Note: the SNK player, like it or not, is a sub-set of the Capcom category — let the hate mail commence!). Your *Tekken* player is more into the game for the flash of mega-hit combos and the timing of a drunken monkey (Waka can directly relate to this group — the monkey's that is). The *Virtua Fighter* player is more apt to fit into the rocket scientist/brain surgeon/super-nerd mold: someone that considers doing calculus equations fun and possesses enough patience to make even Gandhi weep. However, your *Street Fighter* player resides somewhere in the middle: While it's important that there is some element of timing involved (and thus, skill), it's not so precise as to alienate all but holders of doctoral degrees in geometry.

And that's exactly what Capcom's legion of fighters offers: balanced, well thought-out gameplay. Sure, some are more 'crazy' than others (*Marvel vs. Capcom* has been called the *Killer Instinct* of






Capcom brawlers for good reason), but they still offer relatively easy accessibility coupled with the advanced techniques the hard-core gamer craves.

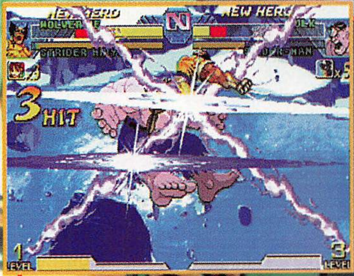
While *MvC* is a little more over-the-top than even the standard *Vs.* series game (*X-Men vs. SF* and *MSH vs. SF*), that's what makes the 'play so enthralling. Take the standard *SF* fighting engine that countless millions have played and Capcom has honed over the years and meld it to a more visceral, kinetic style of gameplay. Sure, some of you may not be fans of the insanely high combos attainable (Strider clocked in at 78 hits with one super-enhanced chain), it certainly makes for some visually-shocking battles. All you really need to know is that if you were a fan of the *Vs.* series of games, you're in for one hell of a ride.

I've Got the Fever for the Flavor of Some Cross Fever

On occasion, if you watched some people play *Marvel vs. Capcom*, you'd notice that two people would play as one team. As soon as another character tagged in, the players would switch and fight as that character— sort of like a *Wrestlemania* game without the extra sticks. Well, Capcom saw fit to throw in an extra mode that takes full advantage of the four ports on the DC console. Now two people can play at once. As soon as one character tags out, the other player comes in playing on his own controls. Better yet, by engaging the Variable Cross super (whereby both characters on a team can be on screen at once) you can bring all four players out at once for your own version of *Wrestlemania* ("Take a stroll down Know Your Role Boulevard," quoth the Rock). Add in the fact that you have unlimited supers at this point and just watch as your more sensitive friends lapse into violent seizures — now that's what I call a fighting game!

It's All About Balance

Most arcade rats don't realize it, but there have been two versions of *Marvel vs. Capcom* brought to market. There are two revisions of the game out there in the wilds of arcade land. The first rev featured a nigh-invincible Strider whose Ourorobos super was capable of 'ticking' a foe to death with extended abuse (ticking, as any Dango-ite will tell you, is the 'art' of defeating foes through blocking damage — turtles beware). This was thankfully rectified by shortening the super in the second revision. In general, in fact, most combos were also toned down. For example, Captain Commando could repeatedly juggle a character nearly to death in a corner (are those the screams of arcade goers flashing back to *Mortal Kombat 3* and it's juggle heavy death in a corner tactics?). Thankfully these issues were mostly addressed in the second revision, though you should still be wary of the 'Team Supreme' which consists of Strider Hiryu and Wolverine. The Dreamcast rev is based (of course) on the second revision.



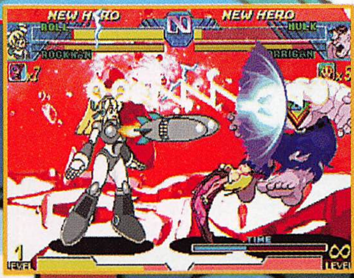


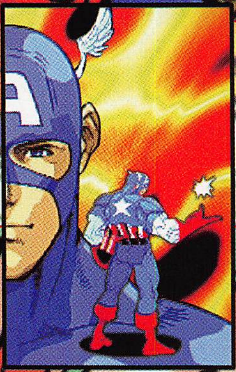
Avengers Assemble... err, Capcom Converge... um, Warriors Wreak... oh, nevermind.

Between the starting line-up (Captain America, Ryu, Spiderman, Morrigan et al) and the bench squad (Arthur, Thor, Lou, Iceman, etc.), *MvC* has the most motley crew of characters this side of the Mos Eisley Cantina (well, maybe not **that** motley). Featuring some of the best of Marvel's extensive line-up of properties (along with some notable omissions: see "*GameFan* Casts *MvC II*") and the return of classic Capcom characters to active status (Captain Commando and Strider(!) among them), this is the main event.







Captain America: "Thumbs up, soldier!"
WWII's favorite son returns for some shield tossin', buddy-bashin' fun — straight out of the pages of a Marvel comic book. Hey, why fight villains wreaking havoc across the city, when it's so much more fun to beat on your 'friends'? We also refer to this as the 'X-Men school of comic writing.'



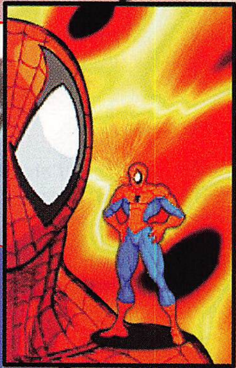
Chun-Li: "Gomen ne"
Everybody's favorite Chinese super-heroine is back (soon to reprise that role in *SF3: 3rd Strike*) and she's as fast and tricky as ever. Some nasty aerial raves (tied up with her lightning kick) make for some serious damage. Her high speed doesn't make matters any easier.



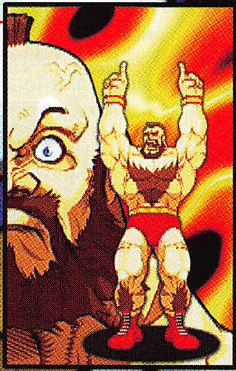
Ryu: "Hadoken!"
Capcom's favorite son (at least until those pushy, unionized members of the *Resident Evil* Brigade showed up; they're worse than Teamsters, I tell ya) returns with the ability to ape the abilities of both Ken and Evil Ryu making him a force with which to be reckoned. Thankfully once the Ken Contingent figured this out, Capcom was spared immense ridicule and the threat of numerous petitions from web sites across the world.



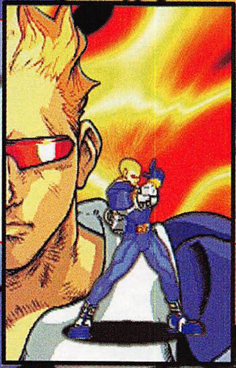
Wolverine: "Rookie!"
The X-Men's resident berserker returns, and is ferocious as ever. Replete with super-fast, mega-damaging supers and some pretty hefty chain combos, Wolvie is a force with to be reckoned. Couple him with Strider and <snikt!> it's go-time, bub.



Spiderman: "It's showtime!"
As with Captain "Stars and Stripes" America, this marks the 3rd time Webhead has made an appearance in a Capcom fighter. While his style of play has remained fairly consistent, his aerial raves are a bit more difficult to pull off due to his insane speed. Now if only there was an Aunt May sub-character...



Zangief: "Bolischoy Tavieda!"
Everybody's favorite Russian bear-brawlin', spinning pile-driving wrassler returns! Alas, he's more here for novelty as the only people that are going to be doing any damage with him are long-time Zangief players.



Captain Commando: "Change Commando"
Come to think of it, CC, in my opinion, is much better suited to the world of one-on-one fighting games. Why? Because his side-scrolling beat-'em-up of ages past was lame (with a capital 'L'). As a fighting game character, he's much better suited to the brutality of the street fight (and who could forget his guitar strum taunt?).



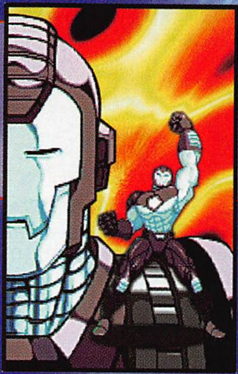
Gambit: "C'mon, mon ami!"
The odd thing about Gambit is that when the computer plays him, he proves to be an extremely difficult opponent (Dangohead chalks this up to the CPU 'turtling' with him). However, if offense is your game, you'd best look elsewhere. Due to the fact that he can cast cards at nearly any point, it makes him more of a 'lay in wait' character who can compete with the more turtle-heavy fighters (Ryu specifically).



Hulk: "Let's rock!"
The jade giant makes a return appearance in three flavors: green, grey and orange. Orange Hulk is only accessible as a hidden character through entering some sort of arcane pad movements on the character select screen (Dangohead would be more than happy to educate you at: dangohead@gamefan.com). Still slow as they come, Hulk is for those of you who are more advanced fighters and aren't as reliant on chain combos (Strider and Wolverine et al) as others.



Jin: "Hajime!"
One of best (at least in 'coolness' factor) is Jin, one of the 'pilots' from *Cyberbots* (for those of you lucky enough to have owned it on SS). While he's of questionable value (hard to chain combos), he has the most spectacular looking supers in the game, most of which involve summoning a Blodia-type mech to do some Donovan-esque, god-summoning damage.



War Machine: "Yahoo!"
While Midway is still the king of the palette-swapped character, WM is simply a grey version (in P1 colors) of Iron Man. Most of his attacks resemble and/or are IM's attacks with some tweaks. In the right hands, a highly destructive choice.



Morrigan: "Lilith ikuwayo"
The sole playable character to make the journey from the *DarkStalkers* universe, Morrigan is yet another in a long line of pseudo-Ken/Ryu clones. While she can get the job done, she tends to be more of an easy access character for those that have played *DarkStalkers* and its ilk heavily (though this probably doesn't mean much in the States).



Venom: "We are Venom"
Perhaps the most wickedly animated character in the game, Spiderman's archnemesis comes to arcades for the first time. Fast, as well as powerful, Venom is capable of dealing massive amounts of damage in relatively short order. Worth playing simply to see each and every frame of animation — truly a sight to see.



Rockman: "Boku ni makasete"
Rockman (or Megaman as he's known here) finally gets the nod in a Capcom fighter. One of Capcom's oldest and originally most popular characters (again, before those *RE* guys showed up and strong-armed him out of town...not to mention that 3D hasn't been overly kind to our aging hero) is also one of the most fun to play. Rush (his trusty canine pal) is always at his side and willing to lend a paw. MM also plays host to one of the more spectacular supers in the game as he morphs into a steroid-loaded version of MegaMan X.



Strider: "..."
We begged, pleaded, kicked and screamed and Capcom finally gave us Strider back... in a fighting game. OK, OK, at least it's a start, right (I can say that without becoming overly upset because Strider is getting his own sequel very soon)? As it stands, with the exception of possibly Wolverine, he's the best character in the game due to his quickness and damage-dealing capabilities.



Sub-Characters
While the aforementioned characters are the star of the show, Capcom saw fit to give cameos to an even wider range of figures from both menageries. Some, such as Psylocke and Colossus, have seen action in previous Capcom fighters. Others are new: Thor, Lou, Roll, Forgotten Soldier, etc. They each act as pseudo-tag team partners and are each good for a limited number of uses each round (depending on how effective they are).

GameFan 'Casts' Marvel vs. Capcom II
Sure it hasn't been announced yet, but when a game takes arcades by storm like *MvC* did, you can bet there's some sort of sequel lurkin' around Capcom. For your perusal, here's what the GF staff came up with for the top-ten characters we'd like to see in a follow-up:

Thing: "It's CLOBBERIN' TIME!"
Think a slightly faster, slightly weaker Hulk, and voila, the Yancy Streeter could do some serious damage. Bring in the rest of the Fantastic Four as a blistering super!! Personally speaking, the single biggest character oversight in all the Capcom/Marvel games.

Thor:
The Norse god of Thunder made it in as a sub-character in the first chapter, but I need to feel the fury of the storm unleashed. Have the Warrior's Three tag along for a Captain Commando-esque team super and bring Beta Ray Bill in as a sub-character.

Silver Surfer:
OK, OK, so he's so far beyond the power levels of the other characters that it's almost unnerving. Then again, didn't the 'regular' heroes fight Thanos at the conclusion of *Marvel Super Heroes*? Come to think of it, they could build an entire *Marvel Cosmic Heroes* game based around Galactus and co.

Daredevil: A John Romita Jr./Frank Miller Daredevil would be hardcore. Equip him with his trusty billy club and he'd be ready to crack some skulls (having Elektra as a sub-character wouldn't hurt, either).

Arch Angel: Red hot death would be the best way to describe AA. Swooping across the screen, bringing razor-tipped death to his foes, Arc Angel would be a force with which to be reckoned. Use his original form as a hidden character (though he'd be a bit of a pansy).

Punisher: How hard would it be to include everybody's favorite vigilante? After all, he did star in his own Capcom arcade game a ways back. Rolling up in Microchip's truck would make for some interesting super/sub-character action (along the lines of Jin and his Cyberbot).

Blade: That's right, everybody's favorite vampire-killer started life as a Marvel comic character. Equip him with some over-the-top firepower and he could go toe-to-toe with the best of 'em (callin' Whistler in for back up, of course).

Forgotten Soldier: One of the best of the earliest Genesis games (and an arcade title prior to that) it's time this sub-character graduated to full-fighter status. Equip him with various 'option' weapons and he'd be armed to the teeth for some mano-a-mano action (include 2P as a palette swap).

J. Talbain: Everybody's favorite lycanthropic Night Warrior would make a keen addition to the Capcom line-up. Throw in a super that would include various other creatures of the night and you're all set.

Bionic Commando: Remember this guy? He's been out of work for years, and he's one of the best things that ever happened to Capcom. Maybe if he got a shot at a role in *MvC II* he'd get his own game again (it worked for Strider, didn't it?).

Dangohead's MvC Combo Primer

When any gamer thinks of Capcom's *Vs.* series, one thing immediately pops into mind: combos. While the combination system of the *Vs.* series makes the game seem juvenile to the likes of the hardcore *Street Fighter* series, *Marvel vs. Capcom* is the most balanced of the *Vs.* series. This does not mean that *Marvel vs. Capcom* isn't without its fair share of 40+ hit combinations; in fact, there are some new features added in *Marvel vs. Capcom* that greatly affect combos. Add into these new features all the air, chain, and super move combos, and you'll start getting lost in this multi-hitting marathon. But don't fret, for this dango is on the job!

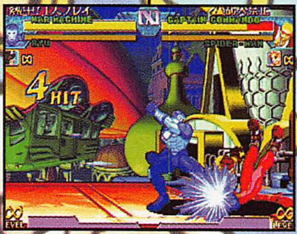
To start off at the basics, *Marvel vs. Capcom* still has all those crazy standards in previous Vs. games. To fill you newbies in on what combos there are:




Two-in-ones: The most basic combo, perform a norma move into a special move in one motion (i.e. Ryu's crouching Fierce punch into a Fierce fireball).



Chain combos: Combos that consist of all normal moves. Chain combos always work from weakest strength of attack to strongest (with a few exceptions). There are three basic types of chain combos:Note: Ground Chain combination types may differ from Air Chain combination types (i.e. Megaman's Ground type is Strongest/Line while his Air type is ZigZag/Hunter type).



Juggle combos: Juggle combos are combos that knock an opponent off the ground.




Weak Start/Limited Type: This system of combination attack starts with a Jab punch or Short kick and immediately ends with any attack of higher intensity.

Variabl
Combination
Supe









ZigZag/Hunter Type: This system of combination attack is the most flexible, allowing you to chain every normal attack (i.e. Jab, Short, Strong, Forward, Fierce, Roundhouse,).

Helpers

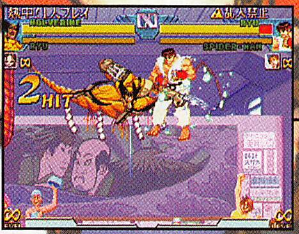
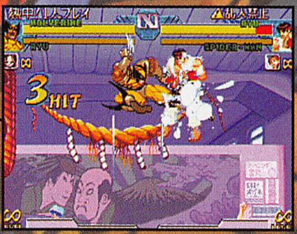






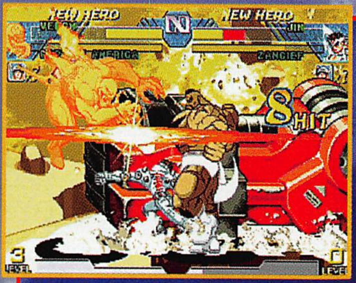


Strongest/Line Type: This system of combination attack starts with the weakest punch or kick attack, and ends with the strongest punch or kick attack respectively (i.e. Jab, Strong, Fierce or Short, Forward, Roundhouse).

All of the above can happen either on the ground (in standard *SF* style) or in the air. To enable combos in the air, the target must be launched into the air. Every character has a normal move called a Launcher, which can launch an opponent into the air, and be immediately followed up with an air combo. Note, that once the Launcher connects, simply pressing up on the D-pad will automatically make your fighter Super Jump.

Lastly, there are two new features that greatly affect combinations. One is the Variable Cross feature (qcb + Fierce punch + Roundhouse kick) allowing both characters on a team to simultaneously fight on the screen. While it is hard to conduct both characters in a concerted effort for maximum combo ability, you can perform different super moves that you wouldn't be able to do with the Variable Combination Super (qcf + Fierce + Roundhouse). And finally, Helpers (Strong punch + Forward Kick) can add additional hits even before you start your combo. Look in the Hocus Pocus Section for examples of some fantastic combos!







Eggo's Counterpoint (a.k.a. Marvel vs. Capcom From the Hard-Core Street Fighter Perspective)

"After having to endure a blistering assault as to why Marvel vs. Capcom is the greatest thing since parallax, I gathered that it might be a good idea to give GF's resident *Street Fighter* guru, Eggo, a chance to peruse *MvC* himself and present you with another side of it. Important to note, however, is that Eggo is more into your so-called 'hard-core' *SF* contests; *SFA* primarily. That having been said, go easy on him...

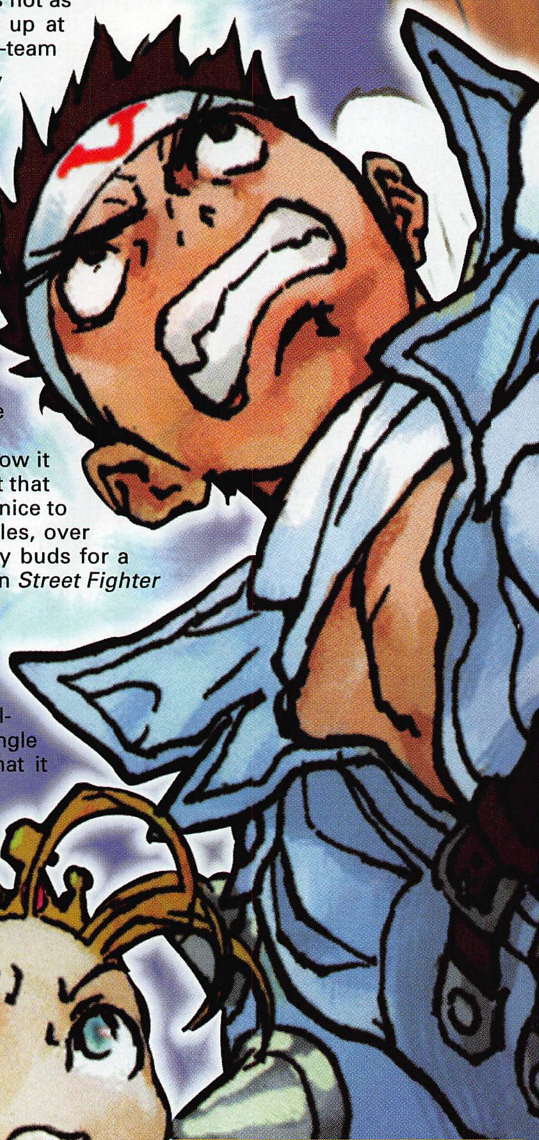
I've been playing in *Street Fighter* tournaments since the original *SFII*. That said, it shouldn't surprise you that I'm not that thrilled with Capcom's *Vs.* series. I consider them the bastard children of Capcom's arcade bread and butter for the past 10 years. Hard-core *Street Fighter* players look down on the *Vs.* series as fleeting diversions — like those unofficial Hong Kong mods of *Street Fighter* which let you have 20 heat-seeking Sonic Booms on screen at once. If you want to play a **real** *Street Fighter*, avoid anything with Vs. or "the Movie" in the title.



Capcom is catering to the mass market by releasing games like this: full of dazzling special effects, eye-searing flashes, and insane combos. The gameplay is not as solid as a real *Street Fighter*, but people are lining up at arcades to drop their quarters in to see the next tag-team super. The *Vs.* series is definitely an arcade success, probably because it's designed for the guy who's new to *Street Fighter*. Want proof? Look at how the interface has been dumbed-down over the years. A fireball and two buttons to do a super? Super motions should involve two scoops, double-sonic-boom motions, and most of all — dexterity.

So here's *Marvel vs. Capcom* on the Dreamcast. Am I excited? ...Mildly. It's the first 2D game on the DC, and as far as it being a vision of what's to come... I'm ecstatic about the 2D potential of the Dreamcast. A *Vs.* game without loading and slowdown was but a dream in the 32-bit days, but now we're seeing a newer generation of titles, and games are actually making the leap from dark arcade to dark living room... with nothing lost in between.

I appreciate *MvC* for being a Capcom fighter, for how it looks, for what it holds for the future, and for the fact that it's sprites instead of polys (though Model 3 is awful nice to look at). It's a Dreamcast title which will sell consoles, over here or in Japan. But if I want to sit down with my buds for a competitive match of *Street Fighter*, we're popping in *Street Fighter Alpha 3* on the PlayStation."





Excelsior!

So yeah, I guess "living in the past" can be fun, on occasion (I certainly wouldn't recommend it when dealing with the fairer sex, however). But perhaps the single best part of *Marvel vs. Capcom* is the simple fact that it brings together some of the classic Capcom characters we all grew up with as well as a bevy of Marvel comic characters that every comic fiend (yours truly, included) knows intimately. Now all I need is a *DC vs. Marvel* fighting game to prove once and for all which comic universe is truly numero uno. I'm gonna go with Wizard magazine at this time and say DC. Just imagine...Hulk vs. Superman; Captain America vs. Batman...oh man, the fanboy in me is all a-flutter... <giggle>. ECM

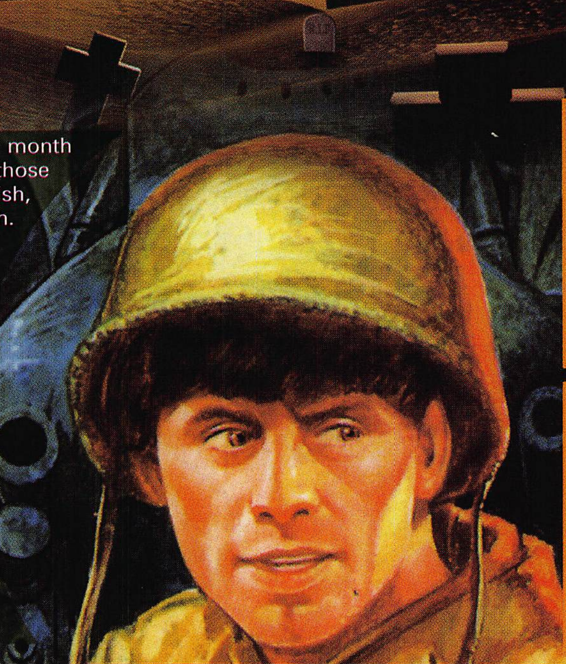


P.S. For those of you that expected this to be a rant about 2D and how it's dying and how nobody respects in anymore, kindly turn your attention to the *Metal Slug X* review at the end of the issue. Thank you.





THE GRAVEYARD



Much like that other Graveyard game this month (*Magician Lord*), *Nam '75* was one of those early Neo Geo games that made me wish, for the first time in my life, that my mom was rich. But she wasn't, and needless to say I never did own a Neo home system. But I always had the arcade, and in the arcade, all classes were equaled out (well, as long as you had quarters, otherwise you were back to being poor!). Every day after school, like clockwork, was Neo time. My time.

I loved the early Neo games, especially *Nam '75*. The way it looked, the way it played, the way it talked... how cool was it the first time you heard the game say "Will I ever get out of this hell?" as the hero sprayed fire every which way? Remember how cool it was to waste baddies by the dozen? Then remember when *Street Fighter 2* came out and suddenly the arcade wasn't the place it once was...?







NAM-1975

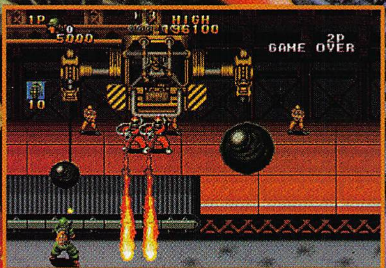


Very much the 'Cabal' type of game, *Nam '75* was extremely unfortunate to come out at a time when shooters were on the wane, and fighting games (again, *SF2*) took over. Also, the game was tough... really tough. Who knows, maybe after the cost of the system (back then it ran nearly 600 bucks), plus the cost of the game (at LEAST 200 bucks) it would've cost less to actually buy the game then it would to beat it in the arcade! But when a brand spanking new Genesis or SNES cost 1/5 the price of a new Neo machine, there really wasn't that much choice. Many would-be Neo owners looked elsewhere (I must admit, I was one of those who flocked away; did you honestly think I was a 12-year-old with half a G? Yeah, right!).

Nam '75 was a great game that never really took off the way it should have. Perhaps if SNK would've lightened up on the difficulty (a trait they would later make infamous with horrendously difficult *King of Fighters* bosses...ugh, Rugal!), then maybe more people would've played it. But alas, the fact that the home version was so expensive also worked against it, so strike two on waiting for a cheaper way to play. Oh well, it happens. With cheaper, comparable SNK ports happening all the time on the newer machines (especially the Dreamcast) mistakes like this will probably never happen again... I hope. **Super Teeter**











Magician Lord







Believe it or not, there was time when 2D gaming flourished in an industry that has now almost completely forgotten the beauty of the once-glorious sprite. Oh, how I miss those days when companies such as Konami, Capcom and SNK dazzled gamers (including myself) with gorgeous, hand drawn, sprite-based games that captivated audiences with their insane (in the day) levels of animation and characters that just simply redefined the word "cool." And what game better summed up this abandoned era better than *Magician Lord*?





First off, the graphics in *Magician Lord* were, at the time, cutting edge. In fact, compared to the marvel of 16-bit (that's a joke!) *ML* seemed to me to be a technological breakthrough in video games... 24-bit baby! "Are you seeing this?"... that's what I kept muttering to my friends as we all huddled around the Neo cabinet at my local arcade. "Dude, look at that boss... it's huge!" And huge the bosses were, as well as intricately detailed and nearly impossible to beat, but at a quarter a pop (I'm sorry, but fifty cents is just a rip!) I wasn't going anywhere till I had beaten level one...<whew>, what a day!





Easily though, my fondest memories of *Magician Lord* came with the ability of Elta (the *Magician Lord* himself) to transform (*Altered Beast* style!) into an array of awesome characters, including a ninja, samurai and dragon warrior, to name a few. Each new character was formed from a mix of multiple elements (water, fire, and wind) that could be obtained by collecting black orbs hidden throughout the game. The dragon, for instance, could breathe fire, while the samurai had a magical katana with which he could shred enemies.





But it was the platforming elements in *Magician Lord* that made it such a stand-out title. The levels were brilliantly designed, with tons of nearly impossible jumps and an almost non-stop barrage of enemies to send to the nether-realms. How anyone managed to afford to play completely through *ML* in the arcades is a mystery to me. I personally opted to mow most of the lawns in Southern California for a chance to own a Neo Geo at home, and even then *Magician Lord* was still a challenging platformer!

Almost ten full years later, *ML* still remains one of the best 2D games ever. In fact, my only gripe is that SNK never managed to produce a sequel. So until then, I'll just be waiting here patiently (praying!) for *ML2*, *Crystalis 2*, a real sequel to *Sengoku*, *Cyber Lip 2*, *Super 8 Man*... **Fury**



neo AnimeFan

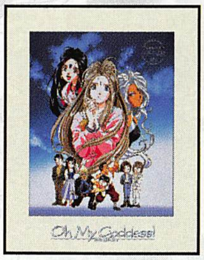
More than just "the anime section" - Anime, Manga, Asian Live-Action, J-pop, Culture, and all related products.

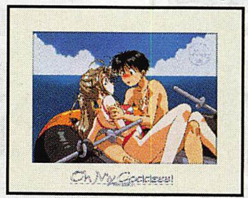
Thirteen years after *Nausicaa* ... a statement made about *Mononoke Hime* that means a great many things. Miyazaki has once again crafted a masterpiece, but I'll let my coverage in this issue say more about that. You remember how a few years ago we were complaining that there weren't enough RPGs coming out in the US. Now, there's TOO MANY! I'm so far behind that it's not funny ... as of my writing this, I have yet to sit down with *Parasite Eve*, *Xenogears*, *Legend of Lagia*, I haven't finished *Tales of Destiny* yet, and I've got like five or six more to look forward to in the next few months. [sob] I never thought I'd hear myself complaining about how many RPGs were coming out ove here. ^_^ Well, I hope that yo enjoy this issue, I slaved over m little G3 for YEARS to make it. B the time I'm finishing up the nex issue, I'll probably have seen th *Phantom Menace* by then, so I' surely have something to say o that. And remember, Jem is truly truly, truly outrageous. *- shidosh*

Goods Showcase

Chroma-Cels

Once again, I bring you a look at the newest Chroma-Cel products from Ani-Magine, and this time, I'm pleased to announce the release of two cels based on one of my all-time favorite anime titles, *Oh My Goddess!* Jeff over at Ani-Magine has been talking to me about the *OMG!* cels for what seems like forever now, and finally, after all this time, they're done, they're here, and they look great. I've got to say, and this could be from my obvious bias, that the Chroma-Cel with Keiichi and Bell-chan in the boat has to be the absolute best looking cel of the Chroma-Cel line yet produced. In addition to the two from *OMG!*, two additional *Sailor Moon* cels have also been produced - one the familiar shot of Serena and Luna posing in front of the moon, and the other showing all five of the original Sailor Scouts. If that weren't enough, we're also giving you a peak at the next two *DragonBall Z* Chroma-Cels - one with a nice little group shot, and the other with some guy with gold hair on fire or something (Shidoshi says just to rile up the *DBZ* fans out there [hehe]). Three hot summer titles for Ani-Magine to help strengthen their Chroma-Cel line, and if you think these are good, just wait until yo see what else they've got in store. If yo think of what titles they haven't done ye and which title would be the most request ed among fans, you could probably make good guess as to one of their future title ^_^ By the time you read this, unles something has gone horribly wrong, th new *Sailor Moon* and the *Oh My Goddess* Chroma-Cels will be out in stores for you t purchase and enjoy, and the ne *DragonBall Z* cels should be arriving in th not too distant future. *- shidoshi*









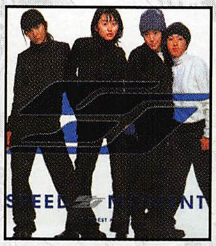
Audio Delights

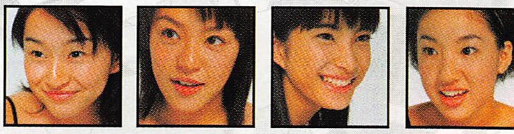
SPEED: Moment

J-pop • Toy Boy / Avex Trax
12 tracks • 1 CD • Best Hits Collection

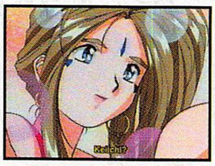
A-

I've been a fan of J-pop (Japanese Pop) for quite some time now, even with the strange fact that I probably wouldn't listen to the exact same songs if they weren't Japanese. [shrugs] As I've started getting more serious about the music and actually began to follow specific groups (no doubt due to my exposure to J-pop increasing thanks to my circle of Japanese friends expanding by about 1000% over the past months), one band I've really fallen for is a group of four girls called SPEED. While a few certain friends never fail to give me grief about liking them, the girls of SPEED are cute, likable, pleasing to listen to, and most importantly, sing some damn good songs. *Moment* is a "best hits" collection for SPEED, and brings together a wide array of their hits and best tracks. Of course, two of SPEED's biggest hits, "Go! Go! Heaven" and "White Love" are included; White Love, which is still a top karaoke song in Japan, is actually included three times on the CD - the original version, the "Christmas Standard" version, and an instrumental version for hours of karaoke fun. Other tracks joining the gang are "All My True Love," "Body and Soul," and "Alive" (a song I've had on repeat far too often). However, without question, my personal favorite track on this one has to be "Kettaiya." This song is SOOO good that I cannot put it into words. I originally purchased *Moment* simply on my love for Alive, but once I heard Kettaiya for the very first time, I was pu into a strange trance-like state that I've ye to recover from. If it's possible in any wa to wear out a CD, mine will be so in tha very spot pretty soon. [hehe] If you'r looking for a good and varied selection o SPEED's music, this is definitely an albu that you'll want to own, as it's track listin pretty much reads as a list of "must-own SPEED songs". Or, if you're simply tryin to get into the world of J-pop, this woul be the perfect place to start. I wouldn't ca SPEED creative geniuses as I might, say Chara or the Brilliant Green, but there' nothing wrong with light, fun Japanes pop - and at that, SPEED excels. *- shidosh*





Shidoshi's Guide to Anime Girls



Belldandy

Loving, caring, sincere, thoughtful, and a great cook. Downfall: you thought normal human girls were hard to please...



"Oooooh..... Kekko owari kai na? Yowaaaa..."

Video Girl Ai

Dedicated to your pleasure and helping your love life. Downfall: you thought it was tough getting a movie watched in its rental period...



Manga Scene

What's New in Print This Month



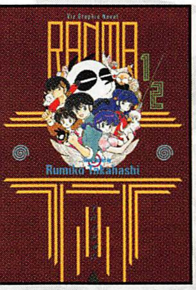
Pokemon: Pikachu Shocks Back

Family • Viz • 7+
40 pages • US Format • Monthly

B

Pokemon - the Japanese sensation hit the United States and instantly went nuts, capturing the hearts and minds of both American otaku and hose who have never even heard of hose cartoons called "anime." Well, it's no surprise that Viz picked up the rights o the manga, and so far, it's been selling out like nobody's business. The story in he manga version of ***Pokemon*** is quite a it different, and I have to admit, I think I ke it better than the anime version. Characters and storylines are more developed, especially when it comes to Misty - she's more interesting in the way of character design and personality in the manga. The artwork is relatively simple, never overly complex or artistic, yet capturing the look and feel of ***Pokemon*** and never dropping to an unacceptable level. If just hearing the name "Pokemon" makes you want to beat Pikachu about the head with a baseball bat, the manga will do nothing to change your opinion. If you're a fan of ***Pokemon***, however, I would definitely recommend that you check it out, and it's the perfect title for all of the younger anime fans out there. That is, of course, if you can actually find copies still in stock at your local comic market. ***- shidoshi***





Ranma 1/2: Volume 13

Comedy • Viz • 11+
198 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

B+

Kind of a funny story, actually ... when planning to cover both the ***Ranma 1/2*** OAV and latest manga graphic novel for this issue, I had no idea that hey both included the exact same storyline. Okay, so maybe it's not FUNNY, per se, but I found it sort of coincidental unless Viz purposely plans the anime and manga timing that way, in which case I'm probably sounding like a pretty big moron right now). Erm, anyhow, I hought it'd be an interesting chance to compare the two, and see if my old Rule #41 ["Rumiko Takahashi manga is always better than the anime version"] still held true.

Ranma 1/2 volume 13 contains ... well, stories about Ranma, his family and friends and enemies, and all of the kooky and wacky things that happen to them. We start the graphic novel off with Ryoga travelling alone in the mountains, when he comes upon a strange old hermit. The hermit, in exchange for food for his hungry belly, offers Ryoga the chance to be the "strongest man in the world." Ryoga accepts the interesting offer, but s he ready for the price that comes along with such power? Next, Happosai must deal with a rare and random act of kindness he showed two children a while ago when they search him out. They believe he is Santa Claus, and they have come to help Santa out in his duties and become his students. But since when did being Santa involve stealing panties from clotheslines and running off without paying for food? Can Ranma keep the children from being corrupted, and can Happosai deal with having such an act of kindness in his past? Then it's over to Kuno, who pulls a magic sword from a rock (A rock, not THE Rock, ya jabronie), and is granted three wishes. Ranma and his father decide that if they can steal the sword from Kuno, they could use the wishes to remove their curses. Ranma hatches a plan to turn into his female self and go out on a date with Kuno, in order to try to steal the sword. But, of course, if Ranma actually got the sword and was free of his curse, we wouldn't have much of a story anymore, so his plan backfires at every chance it gets! Finally, the Gambling King makes his return, ready to stake his claim to the Tendo Dojo. Can Ranma, the worst card player in the world, win it back?

Even though I'm not a ***Ranma 1/2*** fan or a follower of the series and its characters, I enjoyed the time I spent with this one. Rumiko's manga, more often than not, is really funny and easy to get into even if you have little to no familiarity with the characters. And, seeing as how Ukyo, my favorite of the ***Ranma 1/2*** crew, got prominent exposure in the Gambling King storyline, that certainly didn't hurt my opinion of this volume. **[hehe]** I'd recommend the manga version of ***Ranma 1/2*** before I would the anime, and even if you aren't a ***Ranma 1/2*** fan to any degree (like me), you might still be able to get your money's worth out of the manga. Even if I couldn't care less about a majority of the characters, the humor is there, I laughed out loud at a few parts, and that's all I really asked for. ***- shidoshi***



AnimeFan rates each title reviews on a scale of A (excellent), B (good), C (average), D (poor), and F (horrible). Remember, a grade of C isn't bad, and only when a title starts getting into the D range should you start to consider avoiding it at all costs. For DVD titles, two scores are present, one for the anime itself, and the other for it's DVD presentation. The DVD grade covers everything from image quality to package to extras, so while a DVD may look beautiful, it could loose points for having no extras or other such issues.

Guide to Ratings Codes

We'll use this example:

Sub | Dub
VHS | LD | DVD

Black: The title is available in that format / language. So, for our example, the title is out in both Sub and Dub on VHS.

Underlined: The version being reviewed. So, we're reviewing the VHS Sub version.

Greyed: Not available. So, our title isn't out on LD.

Red: Coming soon / planned. Our example title is planned for release on DVD.

Send comments, letters, artwork to:

AnimeFan
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit #E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Or :
shidoshi@gamefan.com

Girls

THINK ANIME GIRLS ARE BETTER THAN REAL LIFE ONES? READ OUR GUIDE TO SEE HOW THEY MATCH UP

A-ko

Cute redhaired girl who saves the Earth quite often. Downfall: meeting the parents is SLIGHTLY more nerve-racking.



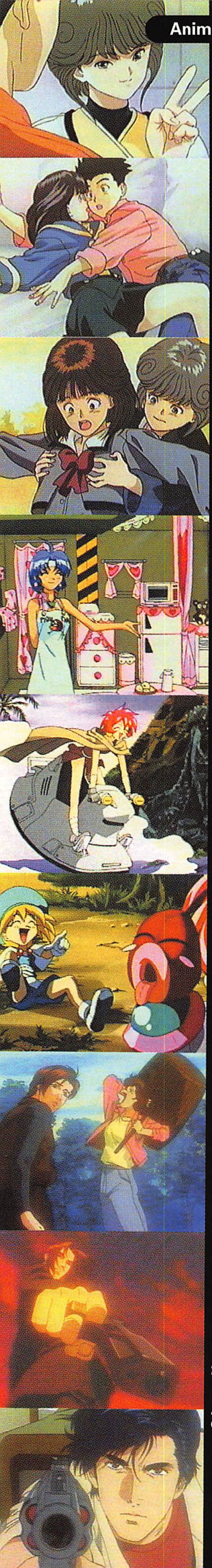
Ranma-chan

Cute, lively, and can beat up your enemies. Downfall: romantic bubble bath for two NOT a good idea...



La Blue Girl

Defends underworld from a variety of sex-crazed demons. Downfall: defends underworld from a variety of sex-crazed...



Anime Drive In
What's playing in anime this month

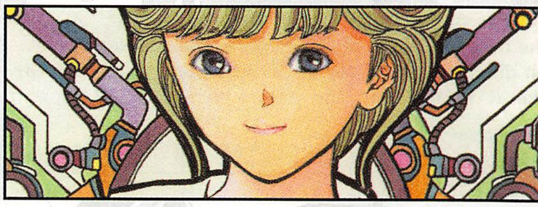
Video Girl Ai

AF Best of the Issue!

Comedy/Romance • OAV • Viz Video • 13+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

A-

Yota Moteuchi - nicknamed "dateless." No parents ever around at home, no girlfriend to call his own, things are usually pretty lonely for Yota. Not only that, just when things seem like they can't get any worse, the girl of his dreams, Moemi, tells Yota that she is in love with his best friend! Depressed, upset, emotionally weak, Yota wanders into a video store he's never seen before and rents a "video girl" - a girl on video tape meant to help cheer up lonely guys. Be it magic or fate, something goes seriously wrong, and Yota find Ai, the girl on the video, suddenly lying on his bed! Suddenly Yota isn't lonely anymore, but is having Ai in his life worth the trouble she brings? Yota is torn between his love for Moemi and his sudden attraction to the new girl, and Ai is torn between helping Yota in his quest to get the girl and her growing feelings for him. With one month before Ai's video runs out and she ceases to exist, will the two be able to help Yota rid himself once and for all of his nickname, or will their quest fall away due to their feelings for one another? It took FAR too long for *Video Girl Ai* to make it to the US, but thankfully it's finally here - I've been wanting this one for quit some time, and have been reading the manga religiousl since it started it's US run. I was, I have to say, a bit dis appointed with the first episode for a number of reason it jumped back and forth between flashbacks, which ma be a bit confusing for those who haven't read the manga and the story was horribly compacted and quickene over the manga. However, come the second episode things got a lot better, and the anime settled into a pac which does the story far more justice. This may be a older title, but it's top quality in everything from art t animation to it's soundtrack. This is another wonderfu classic anime that all otaku should experience, and i you've been reading the manga in *Animerica Extra*, the you'll certainly want to check this one out. *- shidoshi*



Knights of Ramune

Comedy/Hentai • OAV • Software Sculptors • 16+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B-

It's the future, and sadly, the galaxy has fallen into it's required state of chaos and near destruction. The time has come for two Holy Virgins to be chosen to go and seek out the Champion of the Galaxy, the great Fourth Warrior Ramune. Cacao (the spunky and energetic one) and Parfait (the quiet and intellectual one) are those two very girls of purity, and they find themselves being blasted into space to seek out and serve under Ramune. But when they find him, he's not who they expect him to be - instead, he's a cold, cruel, tyrannical villain bent on crushing anybody or anything that stands in his way under his boots. Cacao and Parfait are now faced with a moral decision - disobey their entire reason for existence, obeying the Fourth Warrior, or do as he bids and help him in his evil plan. Deciding that they must stop him, the girls end up teaming up with a spirited orphan named Lemon, Cacao's "spiritual advisor," and a giant mecha that they end up "borrowing " from Ramune. The small band or rebels must stop Ramune and his plans for destruction, or the entire universe will bend to his will.

I can't remember the last time I've changed my opinion about a title so drastically while watching it as I did with *Knights of Ramune*. A while into it, I had all but written it off as mindless banter with a great deal of elements taken from pretty much anything you could think of (*Macross*, *Gundam*, *Dirty Pair*, *Star Wars*, *Maison Ikkoku*, *MegaMan Legends*, etc.). And yet, once at it's end, I came to see it as light-hearted fun with a great deal of elements from pretty much anything you could think of. If, like many silly anime comedies, you don't expect much going into it, you might find yourself really enjoying it like I ended up doing. By it's end, I wanted to see more, and I'll most definitely check out the next volume. I wouldn't call it a strong, unquestionable hit comedy the likes of *Tenchi Muyo* or *the Slayers*, but it's still worth your time none the less. It's only big downfall is that it is HEAVY on the "mature" side at times, and while hardcore hentai fans might not think there's enough, it's far naughtier than your average comedy. I could do with it not having so much adultness to it, but I guess that's how it goes. *- shidoshi*

City Hunter: The Movie

Action/Comedy • Movie • ADV Films • 15+
90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B+

Is it just me, or are there no "bad-ass hardcore" anime char acters anymore? What I mean is, years ago, we were give Golgo 13, Kenshiro, Cobra, Captain Harlock, and City Hunte Who has come along recently? It seems like the only time w have such characters come around nowadays, it's just th older characters being given new movies or OAVs. Hrmm Well, with the other big guns of the anime world getting thei shots in the US recently, it was only a matter of time befor Ryo Saeba - aka "City Hunter" - made his way to the US, an he's come in the form of *City Hunter: the Movie*. Ryo is hire by a famous celebrity to find her long lost brother, around th exact same time that strange events begin to occur all aroun downtown Tokyo. As Ryo gets deeper into the case, piece begin to fall together into a much larger puzzle. A man wh calls himself "Professor" has come to Tokyo for one specifi reason - City Hunter himself. Ryo must now not only protec his client, an entire city, but also himself as well. *City Hunte* was a title that I've known for a long time (thanks to the wonderful worl of "screener tapes" that used to g around the US anime underground but this was my first chance at get ting to see an entire show all of th way through (and in English to boot) Ryo is your typical lovable leach, tak ing breaks from hitting on wome now and then to actually do a bit o work, all while his partner Kao beats him senseless with an endless amount of anime-brand mallets. Th movie was done with a nice styl and flair, and I could totally see thi being a live action movie starrin someone like Jackie Chan (er, wait a minute...). There isn't a lot that yo haven't seen before here, but it's a better telling of the suspense an "loose cannon detective saves th day" tale than many before it. Sor of like *Lethal Weapon* starring Jim Carrey. *- shidoshi*



"Huh? Radio? ... What's with that radio?"

Genocyber: Legend of Ark De Grande

Action • OAV • US Manga • 13+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B-

he world falls to ashes, the Genocyber slips into slumber. lankind survives, and 300 years later, a new civilization built n peace and happiness has arisen from the ruins. But the leals of the city are false creations by the rich and powerful, as nost suffer dismal and worthless lives in poverty and misery. wo young lovers, Ryu and Mel, come to the city of Ark De irande, in the hopes that they can find someone who can eturn Mel's sight. But soon they find themselves caught up in ir more than they expected, and when all seems lost and Mel ears for Ryu's life, she awakens the soul of the Genocyber, vho returns to bring vicious judgement once again to all nankind. I'll be honest with you, I've never seen an episode of *Genocyber* before, so I can't tell you how much this storyline onnects to previous ones (and I'm guessing the confusion I had while watching was because of this). *LoADG* was a lot more artsy and story-driven than I was expecting from an anime based around a robotic being bent on destruction, which both surprised and relieved me. Where I thought I would just sit through it and pray for it to be over, *LoADG* held my attention the entire time and won me over in caring about it's characters. Another positive point, to me, was the art and animation style, which is done in a style that I'm very fond of (it's hard for me to explain the exact style, but it's very close in look to things like *Lain*, *Darkside Blues*, and *Birdy the Mighty*). There were times when things slipped up a bit or showed a bit of roughness, but overall, they story, pacing, mood, and atmosphere created all came together rather well, and made me like a type of anime that I might normally not give a second glance to. I've got to say, if all of Genocyber is like this, I might have to go back and catch up on what I've missed. Not for everyone, but a pretty cool little show. *- shidoshi*

Ranma 1/2: Tattoo You

Comedy • TV (2 eps) • Viz Video • 9+
65 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

Vhat price would you pay to have a wish fulfilled? That is the uestion Ryoga must face when he is given the "Mark of the iods" by a strange old hermit. With the mark on his stomch, Ryoga becomes the strongest fighter in the world, easily efeating all that challenge him. The only problem is that the nark comes in the way of a ridiculous looking tattoo in the hape of a silly face! Fearing what Akane might thing of him she sees the mark, he asks Ranma for help, hoping that anma will be the one to finally defeat him, thus making yoga's mark disappear. Ranma swears to defeat his rival, but e finds that to be far easier said than done. When comparing he *Ranma 1/2* anime to the manga, I have to go back to what ve always said: Rumiko Takahashi's titles are better in their riginal manga form than translated into an anime. Even hough this anime version of the whole tattoo story is virtual-y identical to it's manga sibling, the manga, at least to me, just andles the story and site gags better. My problem with the nime could be, and this is just a theory, that Rumiko's humor s funny when it's one-panel scenes, but when you take those ame jokes and stretch them out into a scene that takes a coule of minutes, it's just not the same thing. We've seen it nany times before when popular comic strips go from print to nimated, and that's what I think the case is with the *Ranma* nime for me. For many of you out there, the *Ranma* anime s a central factor in your life, and it's honestly not a bad little omedy series (the cast needs to be trimmed down by about alf, though). However, for me, if I get the sudden need for a *Ranma 1/2* fix, I'll stick with the manga. *- shidoshi*

Fist of the North Star: Vol 2

Action • TV (3 eps) • Manga Video • 16+
75 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

Fist of the North Star ... hmm, it's been a long time sense I've watched or read anything on this series, and I have only one thing to say about it - old school! The visuals are, well, looking a little dated, and the character designs are, uhm ... oh hell, they just plain look antiquated. Even with that said, there is still a lot of love that must be shown for this show. I mean, anybody who is anybody that calls themselves an anime fan should know what *Fist* is. There's a lot to be said for the consistency that is present in each episode - you know, the usual plot. Boy meets villagers, boy saves villagers, well of course not before one of the big bad groups of motorcycle riding, mace toting, village pillaging, wise cracking, mohawk wearing youths puts their wasted skills to good use on some helpless villagers. Of course, this is all done just to show you - the paying customer - that this artist doesn't like to pull punches in an attempt to deliver you a sick, twisted, Mortal Kombatian (can I use that word?) experience. Anyhow, if you've watched the movie (which, if you haven't by now, you should lose your anime watching privileges), you may notice that the voice overs aren't up to par with the movie, and in some cases are quite comical. In any case, *Fist of the North Star* the series is at least a must rental, especially for the anime fan who enjoys seeing things blow up reeeeeeeal good! [evil snicker] And, before I go, next time you meet with a native of the Land of the Rising Sun, just say the famous words, "Omae wa mo shinderu." *- Maurice Williams*

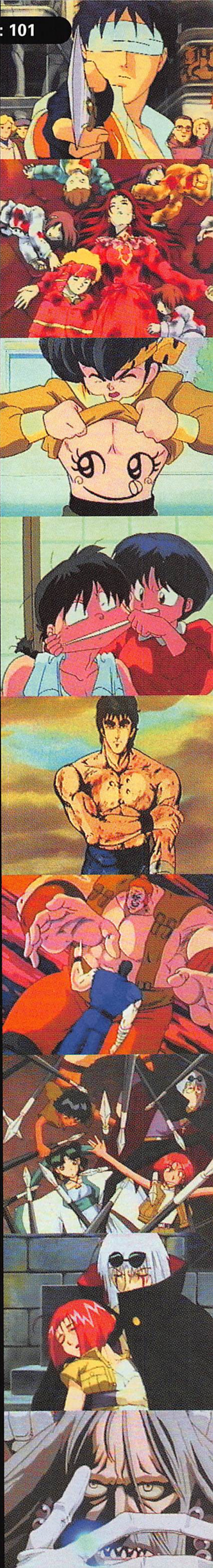
Master of Mosquiton

Adventure/Comedy • OAV • ADV Films • 13+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

A-

naho is a woman of the world - strong, brave, she travels the Earth on adventures looking for ancient treasures. Above all, owever, is one that she wants to obtain more than anything the O-Part. It is said that the one who acquires the O-Part vill find eternal life and beauty. Inaho, following in the footsteps of her grandmother, makes her way into the family rypt which has been sealed off for years. Inside, Inaho finds Mosquiton, the vampire warrior who was the servant of her randmother, and his companions Hono, the master of fire nd Yuki, the ice princess. Now that she has her own little rmy, Inaho's plans of finding the O-Part begin to burn with assion, and she drags her new companions off to Shanghai. Two years later, a mysterious pyramid suddenly appears in ondon, and Inaho is sure that it is the key to her finding the O-Part. So off they go to London, but more is waiting there or them than they expect. There are others who want the O-Part for themselves, and of course there are those who want to make sure it doesn't go anywhere. Can Inaho find eternal life through the power of the mysterious artifact, and can Mosquiton keep her from getting killed while she is doing so? Inaho is sort of the Lara Croft of the anime world, and the interaction between her and Mosquiton is absolutely hilarious. The whole idea of the relationship between Mosquiton and Inaho really makes the series interesting: while most of the time he is her grudgingly willing servant, his "evil" self that he changes into in times of need actually wants to kill her and steal her power. So, Inaho is forced to kill him before he kills her, and then must bring her back to life (all while Hono and Yuki, who do like Inaho, also want to see her taken out so that they don't have to listen to her whine anymore). Damn intriguing situation this creates, and makes the show even cooler. Everything else about *Master of Mosquiton* is quality, from the luxurious music to a dub that's really stellar, which back up the character to craft an unquestionably awesome show. I really can't wait for future episodes - ADV secured themselves a hot title here folks. *- shidoshi*

<------ Genocyber ------>
<---- Ranma 1/2 --->
<- Fist of the North Star ->
<--------- Master of Mosquiton -------->





DVD Connection

Anime - ultra high-qual digital style

Pokemon: Sisters of Cerulean City

Family • TV (3 eps) • Pioneer/Viz • 3+
75 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime **B-** DVD **B**

Anime

Misty ... a Pokemon gym leader? It seems that if Ash wants his second gym badge, he'll have to battle against his companion first. Yet once he gets past her, he'll have another challenge to face - a trainer of wild Pokemon that's build up an army of powerful beasts. Can Ash not only defeat his opponents, but survive the endless tactics of Team Rocket as well? I've got to say, my liking of *Pokemon* has lowered a bit lately, simply because I've seen so many good anime titles recently that the "same basic idea every show" formula gets old rather quick (I even found myself yawning a bit during *Magical Project S*, a title I usually love). *Pokemon* is good, if lacking in creativity sometimes, but die-hard *Pokemon* fanatics and kids will dig the show as always (I just need to take a small Pokebreal After reading the manga, though, I wish the anime base itself a bit more around the print version.

DVD

This is, as usual, the typical bare-bones Pioneer DVD tran fer - no extras, minimal chapter stops, flawless image qua ity. Basically, it does the job (the TV series done with be ter image clarity and color quality), and that's all I really a for from a *Pokemon* DVD. However, if you're adama about having any and all of your DVD titles including goo ies and nifty menues, you'll be disappointed. It's nice ha ing any anime titles on DVD that you can get, so even *Pokemon* isn't the most deserving title for the DVD trea ment around, or if it doesn't gain a whole lot from the di ital format beyond image quality, I'd rather have it join th rest of my collection than not have it at all. ***- shidoshi***

Battle Athletes: Go!

Action/Comedy • OAV • Pioneer • 13+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime **B+** DVD **A-**

Anime

All the hard work, all of the training, sacrifices, and hardships that the athletes have endured are about to come together in a grand climax - the final race for the title of Cosmic Beauty. This will be the time when the winners are separated from the losers, but some out there want to make sure that certain people end up as losers. Can Akari find the strength she needs to win deep inside her, the drive to live up to the ghost of her mother, and the skills to keep herself safe from those who want to see her lose? A great ending to a great series, *Battle Athletes* never pushes itself to become a classic among anime, but what it does, it does quite nicely. I enjoyed *BA* all of the way through, and I'm glad that I saw it.

DVD

I had a bit of a heart attack while watching this one, as th subtitles weren't close to what was being said Japanese, and the timing of them was so off they we hard to follow (reading subtitles with no voice speaking just weird). Then, of course, I noticed that I had it on th wrong subtitle track, and I was watching the dubtitle "captioning" titles. [hehe] Whoops. Anyhow, I have litt to speak ill of here, except for maybe the DVD menu which are slow to navigate, both in comparison to menu for other anime DVDs and for the fact that there's litt going on onscreen. Beyond that, it's a typical Pione high-quality DVD job all the way. I popped in the first vo ume of the *Battle Athletes TV* series on VHS when th one ended, and almost fell over from the difference in pi ture quality - I just took the DVD quality for granted whi watching, I guess. ***- shidoshi***

Non-US Anime

Great anime straight from Japan

Mononoke Hime

Drama • Movie • Studio Ghibli • 13+
133 min • Fansub | Fandub • VHS | LD | DVD

NA

What you're looking at is what will hopefully be a regular (or as regular as possible) section in AnimeFan from this point on. While I don't have the room to give wondrous coverage to import titles (leaving that to the actual anime mags out there), I do want to do my part to let people know about anime they should be looking out for, or to make the US publishers aware of titles they should really be looking into. And yes, I know the name "Non-US Anime" stinks - it's just a placeholder until I can think of a better name. ^_^

I'll let you know right now, I'm not going to review *Mononoke Hime* - the copy I saw was straight Japanese, no dub or sub of any kind, and with a movie like this it would be a crime to review it without totally understanding the dialog. So, instead, I'll just talk about it. *Mononoke Hime* is the latest release from the mind of Hayao Miyazaki, the man who was also responsible for *Nausicaa*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Laputa*, and many more (not to mention the man to whom I have built a shrine in my home). It became the number one grossing movie in Japan of all time when it was released, beating out the 15-year reign of *E.T.* (only to go on to be beaten out by *Titanic*, of all things). Not only did it make money, but it cost money as well - $24 million dollars (double the cost of *Akira*) and used an amazing 144,000 cels of animation. *Mononoke Hime* has been compared to *Nausicaa* many times, for good reason: this is said to b the movie that Miyazaki wanted the *Nausicaa* anime t be. The folly of mankind, the destruction of nature, th revenge of animals against man - all major points of th movie. A young boy, Ashitaka, goes off to search for th cure to his curse, which has come to him from a god dr ven mad by rage. He finds a bitter war going on betwee humans and the creatures of the forest, and in the midd of that is San, a young girl who was raised by wolve Ashitaka and San must then come together to try to brin peace back to the land, and keep both sides from destro ing one another. Currently, the US release, which is bein handled by Miramax, is slated for July 9th, and is expec ed to hit a selection of 1,000 theaters around the US (wit a wider release possibly coming soon after). *Mononol* has been given a rating of PG-13 by the MPAA, and n part of the movie will be edited or cut by either Disney c Miramax. The English script has been handled an smoothed out by Neil Gaiman (of the *Sandman* com fame), who has said that he's worked very hard to bot stay true to the dialog and feel of the original Japanes story, while also making the dialog flow and sound bette and more natural than a straight translation. A sub ve sion IS coming, so don't worry, but it will more than lik ly only be the English dub version hitting theater Horribly small coverage, I know, but I'd do more if I ha the room. Either way, this movie is WONDERFUL, an you can not, can not, CAN NOT miss it when it hits ou shores. Now bow to him, damnit! ^_^ ***- shidoshi***

 - San and Nausicaa: the ULTIMATE anime tag team


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AF News Service

You know... the news.



• Utena Revolutionizes the Movies

Officially titled "Shoujo Kakumei Utena: A d o l e s c e n c e Mokushiroku" (Girl of the Revolution Utena: A d o l e s c e n c e Apocalypse), this new movie based around Utena and her world is set for release this summer in Japan (tentatively in August). Not a lot is currently known about the plot, but one fact that is know is that it is not a direct sequel to the television series. Instead, it will be a sort of "parallel" world, where many aspects of the television series are still present, but in different ways, and the final outcome of the movie will be new and original. As well, it is said that the movie will be far more surreal and mysterious when compared to the TV series (which was already quite surreal and mysterious in its own right).

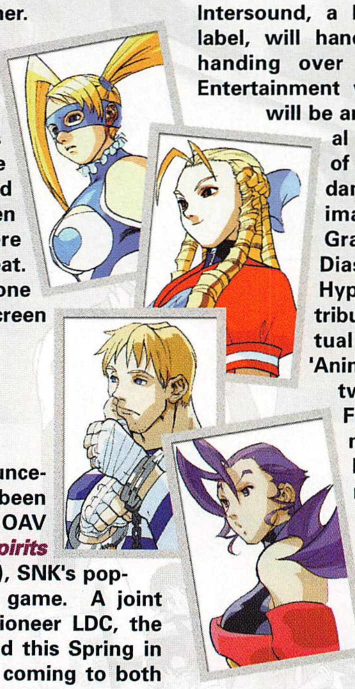
What is known is that the movie will center around the unfulfilled love between Utena and Touga, and the event they shared in the past that still effects their futures even to this day (the story is said to begin at a point where Utena and Touga meet again after a few years). One other factor known, and this is where things get a bit strange and confusing, is that there are now TWO Utenas - one male and one female. As well, character designs look to be changed a bit, most notably Anthy (who has a more "elegant" look) and Utena, with her hair and bangs looking slightly different this time around.



Kunihiko Ikuhara, ***Utena***'s director, has made a few interesting statements about the film. "We intend to precisely show the relationship between Utena and Touga that went unshown in the television series. This will be a film no children can see [due to content]. I want to show the kinds of sins that people struggle to carry."

• Alpha Goes Anime

Not many details on this one yet, but Capcom officially confirmed recently that an anime based around their ***Street Fighter Alpha*** fighting game series is currently in the works. This new anime will make the third official anime based on a ***Street Fighter*** title, following ***Street Fighter II: The Movie*** and ***Street Fighter II V : TV***, and joins ***Power Stone*** as being the second new Capcom-based anime title announced in recent weeks. Little is currently known about the new ***SFA*** anime, such as who it will be based around or what kind of style/art/animation it will have, but Capcom did say that it should see release in Japan sometime this summer.



Opinions have been mixed about the previous ***Street Fighter*** anime attempts, but if the ***Nightwarriors*** OAV series is any indication as to the type of quality we can look forward to from the SFA anime, then Capcom fans everywhere should be in for a real treat. (Just so long as my Rose is done right and gets some good screen time! ^_^)

• A Second Showdown

On the heels of that announcement, information has also been released on a second anime OAV series based off of ***Samurai Spirits*** (***Samurai Shodown*** in the US), SNK's popular weapons-based fighting game. A joint project by SNK, Enix, and Pioneer LDC, the two-part OAV will be released this Spring in Japan, with the first volume coming to both VHS and LD on May 25th, 1999. The anime will be based around the game ***Samurai Spirits 2 - Asura Zanmaden***, which was the second 3D ***Samurai Spirits*** game released for the Hyper NeoGeo 64. For any ***Samurai Spirits*** fans out there, like me, who saw the first anime based on the series, one has to hope and prey that this new release will be no where near as bad as that one was.

Character designs for the OAV are being done by Nanase Aoi, the artist who handled character designs for the first ***Asuka 120% Burning Fest*** fighting game, and who also was the creative force behind many Nakoruru and Rimururu goods released over the last few years to Market Gamest stores in Japan by Shinseisha. The only character designs shown so far are Nakoruru, Rimururu, Shiki, Haohmaru, Galford, and Asura, and it's unsure what cast members beyond those will be showing up for the fun. As well, no information is current known about what seiyuu will be involved in the project.

• Pioneer Mixes Music and Anime

Miami, FL, Winter Music Conference -- Platinum / Intersound Chairman CEO, Steve Devick, and Pioneer Entertainment President Yosuke "James" Kobayashi, announce a partnership to release 'Animetronic' a visual interpretation of music, that blends previously unreleased electronic music tracks with top Japanese animated feature (Anime) title digitally edited into vignettes.

Intersound, a leading electronic musi label, will handle A&R responsibilities handing over each track to Pionee Entertainment where animated footag will be artistically edited into visu al tapestry set to the puls of some of electronics' bes dance music with pristin image and sound quality Grammy-nominated artis Diasuke Hinata, fron Hyperdisc, who will con tribute a track to this concep tual album, conceive 'Animetronic' and brought th two companies together Format wise, the digitall mastered DVD will be i Dolby Digital (5.1 sur round) with a specia interactive menu leadin to a multi angle cli (alternative clip fo same songs), specia artist interviews, traile footage, and produc tion notes.

Through this agreement, Pioneer wi release and distribute the DVD and VHS product, while Intersound / Platinum with proven track record in electroni music, will manufacture and distribute the CD soundtracks. In joint venture, bot companies will supply funds towards marketing and promotional efforts with a global reach in mind featuring ampl cross-promotion, including and MTV "Road Rules" tie in.

• More Guests EXPOsed

The Anime Expo staff recently announced the addition of Hiromi Matsushita to thei line-up of Guests of Honor for the upcom ing Anime Expo '99. Mr. Matsushita has worked in the anime industry for a long time - his extensive list of credits includes animation director for many well-known projects, including ***Sailor Moon***, the origi nal ***Vampire Hunter D***, ***Guyver***, and ***SD Gundam***. Mr. Matsushita also served as animation director for the televisio series ***Granzort***, the original ***Wataru***, and ***Wataru 2***. Other Guests of Honor include Mari Iijima, best known as the voice o Lynn Minmay, Hiroyuki Ochi, who served as the creator, director, and characte designer for the ***Armitage III*** OAV and motion picture, and Sachiko Kamimura known for her work on character designs for ***City Hunter*** and ***Heroic Legend o Asrlan***. Anime Expo '99 is being held from July 16th to the 18th in Anaheim California. For more information, check out their website at http://www.anime-expo.org/intro.html

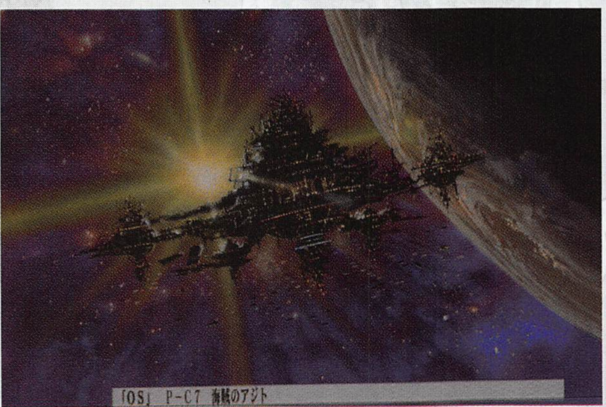
- shidoshi

Outlaw Star

Anime Village

And you were expecting... Shidoshi? Well, the mailman took a wrong turn at Albuquerque and, wouldn't you know it, somehow a preview video of *Outlaw Star* ended up in my hands. And since I wasn't busy sharpening my skills at *VOOT*, or saving the general populace from the dangers of weak-sauce arcade games, I sat down and spent some quality time with this anime. And while I'm not an anime psycho like Shidoshi, I was highly entertained with the 'buddy-buddy' humor of this wacky sci-fi adventure.

The story revolves around Gene Starwind, a mercenary who performs tasks such as repairing vehicles, bounty hunting, and bodyguarding. Together with his teenage computer-whiz sidekick Jim, they take up a bodyguard job that, at first, seems like an easy payoff. However, they soon get caught up in a mess with space pirates, magic-wielding commanders, and other threats. Along the way, they also gain the help of some powerful, and cute, female companions.



The animation is really good, considering this is based on a TV series. Directed by Hongou Mitsuru, better known for the famous *Crayon Shin-Chan*, this anime has sharp details and quality animation. The spaceship designs have a "wasp-like" shape, while the characters range from the spiky-haired, rough natured Jim to the Chinese-ghost-like wizards. But what really pulled me in was the humorous and exciting story, which is an odd mix of western, science fiction, fantasy, and high adventure.

Outlaw Star is a visual delight, but its story is what will win you over. You have Gene Starwind, a mercenary wishing to travel the stars, who holds a childhood secret. There's Hilda, a secretive, veteran outlaw who has no fear of death... but also no value for life. And of course, you have Gene's sidekick, Jim Hawking, a wisecracking teenager who, when not scolding Gene for his womanizing, is always there for support.

The story moves in weird cycles — developing slowly at first, then exploding in a rush, and then slowing down again before you can digest all of what happened. And it's this constantly-shifting-speed plot that kept me interested, up until the cliffhanger ending. But alas, while I would like to continue on with *Outlaw Star*, I'll leave that for Shidoshi next issue... unless of course, that same mailman takes a wrong turn at Walla Walla, Washington. <crossing fingers> ***- Dangohead***



<------ Genocyber ------>



Advertiser's Index

GAMEFAN

Hocus Pocus



Welcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leafs you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail to GameFan, or email hocuspocus@gamefan.com.

Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...

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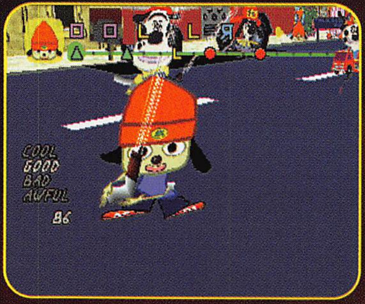
Enter the following as your name:
Hotrod - unlock all cars in test drive and versus modes
Bigoven - Have English speaking cops on all tracks
Flash - Phantom Bonus Car
Whirly - Helicopter

Dashboard View
Select any mode, select a track, then when you are in the car screen, as soon as you hit Race, press Up + Triangle + X. Hold these buttons through the loading screen and once you see the game scenery, release the buttons.





UmJammer Lammy
Play as Parappa



What a treat! After you beat the game with Lammy, go to the Select Level screen. You should see some Parappa candy pieces.



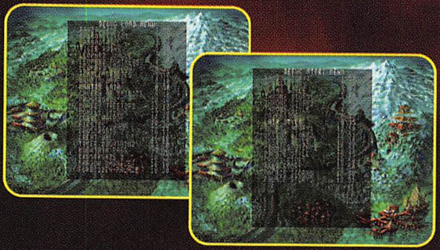
Select them, and you'll be able to play Parappa. And no, he won't be playing a guitar, but he'll be rapping! Two games in one!!!

T'ai Fu
Debug Codes

First off, to enable the Debug codes, you must first enter this code at the map screen. The easiest way to do this is to finish the first mission (which is a training mission) and once on the map screen, enter the following code:
R2, Tri, R2, Tri, Cir, down, Squ

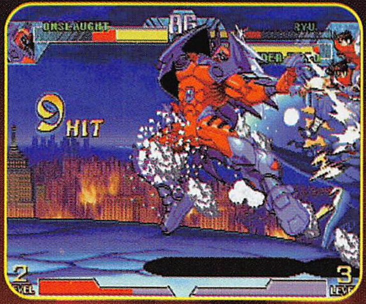


The words "Cheats Enabled" should appear on the screen. Once this is done, enter the following commands for the Debug Codes:



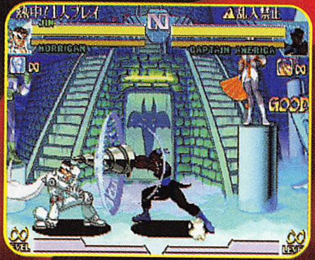
Debug Level Select
R2, Tri, R2, Tri, Cir, Squ, down, Tri, up, right, left, down, up, L1
Story Select
R2, Tri, R2, Tri, Squ, Cir, down, Tri, up, left, right, down, up, L2.

Marvel vs. Capcom
Play as Onslaught



To play as Onslaught, you must first successfully defeat each of the secret characters in Arcade mode, and then save them by going into the Options screen. Once you've unlocked all six secret characters, Onslaught mode will open up on the title screen.

To fight each of the secret characters in arcade mode, you must satisfy certain conditions before you fight the seventh team. Each of these conditions are listed below, but you cannot continue, have a second player join in, or have one of your partners defeated in a fight:



Shadow Lady
12 Super Finishes, 4 of which have to be Variable Cross Finishes (having both team members on screen).
Completely use up Helper every round
Get the first attack each stage



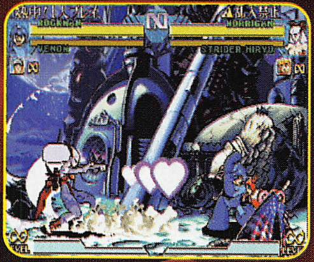
Red Venom
12 Super Finishes, 4 of which have to be Variable Cross Finishes (having both team members on screen).
Get the first attack each stage



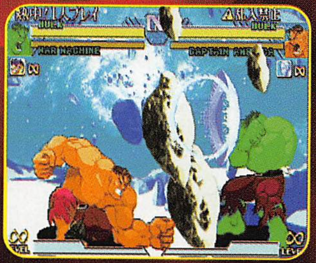
Roll
5 Super Finishes, 2 of which have to be Variable Cross (both team members on screen).
Completely use up Helper for four rounds



Gold War Machine
5 Super Finishes, 2 of which have to Variable Cross (having both team me bers on screen).



Lilith-Morrigan
3 Super Finishes (any kind)
Completely use up Helper for two round

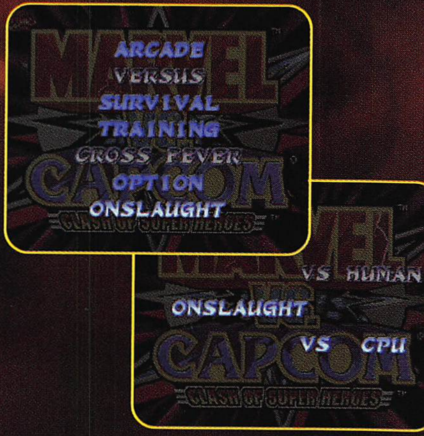


Orange Hulk
3 Super Finishes (any type)

Onslaught Moves

First Form:
Sentinel Bombers – Any button
Sentinel - MP + MK
Headram - d, df, f + K
Magnetic Tempest - d, df, f + P
Hyper Gravitation - f, d, df + P
Eyebeam – d, df, f + two punch buttons Super Level)
Magnetic Shockwave - f, d, df + two ki buttons (1 Super Level)

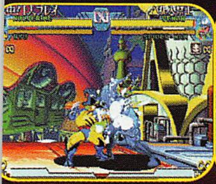
Second Form:
Claw attack – Any punch button
Sentinel Bombers – Any kick button
Eyebeam - d, df, f + P
Rushing Claw - d, df, f + K
Super Eyebeam - d, df, f + 2P



Here's a little taste of the combos we've got for this great game.
Stay tuned next month for a full-blown combo spectacular done by yours truly.

Beginner Combo — Wolverine Ground Slashing

Wolverine is an excellent character to start your combo craziness. This combo is a great one for beginners as it combines the basics of chain combos and a two-in-one into Wolverine's Berserker Barrage X.


Start the combo, with a Standing Jab punch.



Next, chain a Standing Short kick.



Slash the victim with a Standing Strong punch.



Bash them with a Standing Forward kick.



Press Forward kick again for the fifth hit before...



...You unleash a two-in-one into the Berserker Super.

Intermediate Combo — Captain Commando Basic Training Aerial

The timing for the first two hits may vary depending upon your opponent, cuz size does matter when it comes to combos. Otherwise, this is a good combo to practice multi-hit jump-ins with a dashing combo.


Jump to your target hitting with a Strong punch early.



Still in the air, chain a Fierce punch right before landing.



Quickly dash in and connect a Standing Jab punch.



Then chain Standing Short kick for the midsection.



Start the Air Rave with a Standing Roundhouse kick.



Jump up to meet the lackey with a Jab punch.



Continue the air combo by connecting with a Short kick.



Smack down your foe with a Strong punch.



Chain the Forward kick to the keep the enemy in the air.



End the flurry with a fiery Captain Flame.

Advanced Combo — MegaMan's Beat Plane Fury

You need to charge Megaman's Mega Buster for at least 5 seconds and then, you have to perform parts of the combo with the Fierce button held. This combo works best in the corner and your Super Meter needs to be at least at Level 1.

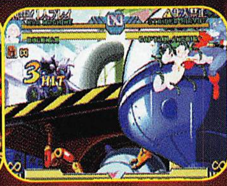

First off, hold Fierce punch down for at least 5 seconds.


Still charging your Mega Buster, execute the Leaf Shield.


Now, dash in with a Standing Forward kick.



Launch the foe with a Standing Roundhouse kick.



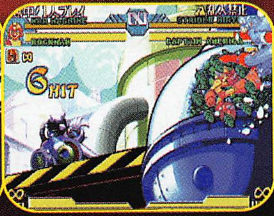
Jump up to the target and connect with a Jab punch.



Chain a Short kick, while still charging the Mega Buster.



Slug the airborne opponent with a Strong punch.



Give 'em a boot to the ribs with a Forward Kick.



Now, fire off the Leaf Shield, and while it's hitting the target...



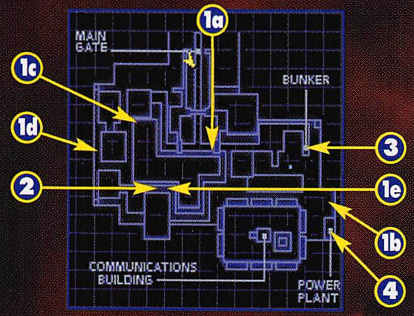
Release the Fierce button for the Mega Buster. Then...



While still in the air, perform the Beat Plane for lots o' hits.

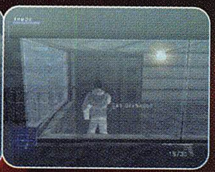
Syphon Filter
Strategy Guide Part 3

In the continuation from Part 2, we move to a series of missions that happens to be this dango's favorite. Larger levels, cool weapons, and cooler bosses (though slightly ripped from another game's "Chopper" boss) are just the cream filling as the story takes a major plot twist. But enough of that, on to the missions!

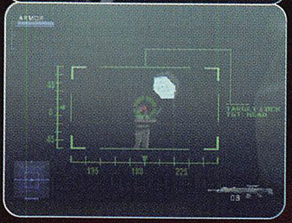


Rhoemer's Base
Objectives:
1) Plant C4 charges at 5 fuel tanks
2) Eliminate Garbek and collect cardkey
3) Reach missile bunker
4) Disable power to motion sensors

This is one of my favorite missions for two reasons. One: the level design is cool, and two: this mission allows for some interesting freedom. While it's best to use stealth and head shots in this mission, if you ever get detected and the alarm goes off, you can still finish the mission. However, guards will be coming at you in waves of 3 or 4, so while it's entirely possible to finish this stage when the alert is on, it's very difficult.

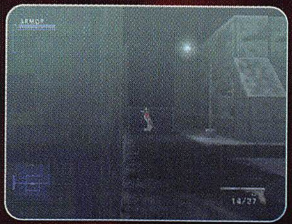
At the start of the missions, you'll find yourself behind the back of a truck, and a guard will be walking away from you in southern direction. There are two guards in the immediate area, both of which will stop their patrols at the other side of the truck. Instead of trying to kill both enemies with a gun, go into the shack right next to you and grab the Gas Grenades. You'll come to love these babies a lot. Now sneak up on the two guards without them seeing you and toss a Gas Grenade at them to take them both out. When the green gas has dissipated, grab their weapons and move in a southern direction.



You'll come upon a guard walking on a catwalk above with a searchlight probing the area. Head shot the guard on the catwalk, and shoot the searchlight — walking in the path of a searchlight will immediately sound the alarm. Sneak to the left side of the wall underneath the catwalk and look into the next area. To the southwest, another guard is on an elevated position right next to a searchlight. Use the sniper rifle to take him out, but don't worry about the searchlight next to him, as it is facing away from him. Move into the new area and head for the stone slab to your right. A guard will appear, so duck behind the stone slab and wait for him to pass you before you head shot him as well. Now, you'll see the first fuel tank located here (1a) but don't set the explosive yet. To the east, you'll see a guard patrolling the entrance to the bunker. Head shot him and walk underneath the stone structure but don't walk out to the area yet. Lian will contact you and after you take the call, sneak underneath the stone structure and face north, but don't go into the new area. A guard will be walking down the ramp, so hide safe behind around the corner and head shot him as he passes. Now set the first C4 charge at the fuel tank and move west into the new area.







When going into the new area, watch out for the searchlight right above you.




The best way to take it out is to move south up the ramp after the light passes you and then shoot it. You'll also see a guard directly south from you, so give him a head shot. Move south past the entrance of the bunker (you can't turn on the switch until you get the cardkey from Garbek) and head for the




Power Plant in the southeast corner of the map. You'll encounter two more guards on your way to the Power Plant, both of which deserve head shots.



When you take the second one out, you'll reach the Power Plant area. Here you'll see the second fuel tank unguarded but the Power Plant is guarded by two guards: one that patrols the area in the



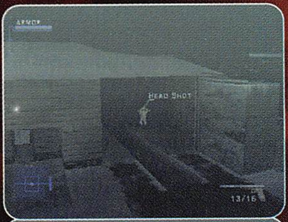


Power Plant, and one who simply stands at the Power Plant switch. Using the Sniper Rifle, sneak into the area outside the fence and take out the patrolling guard so that he lies far away from the other guard. Now move closer to the fuel tank, and you should have a clear head shot to the guard standing in front of the Power Plant switch. Give him a head shot, and plan the C4 charge on the fuel tank (1b). Shoot the lock off and turn off the switch to the Power Plant. Now, head back near the Bunker entrance, and head south up the ramp.



Walk up the ramp and onto the catwalk where you shot your first guard. Now, keep heading west and you come up on three guards. One guard is simply standing there, while the other two are walking in a southwest direction. As soon as the two guards are far enough, shoot the standing lone guard. Now, here's the tricky part. As the two guards round the corner, they will both split up and the right-most guard will trail slightly behind the other guard. Shoot him in the head right before he disappears. The other guard will run back to see what



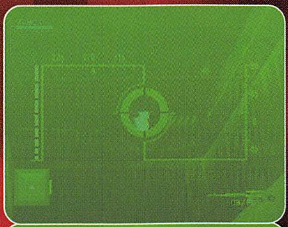


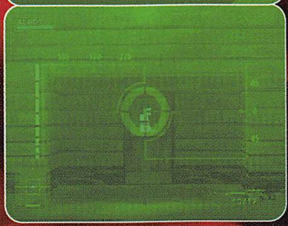






happened. As soon as he stops, give him a head shot. Now, take out the searchlight, and grab the goodies at the bottom of this ramp (Night-vision Sniper Rifle and more Gas Grenades). Grab all the ammo from





the dead guards and head west into the long trench. Eventually, you'll come up to an area with two guards walking at the top of a catwalk with searchlight beaming. Wait till they're both far apart, then shoot them both in the head using the Night-vision Sniper Rifle. Take out the searchlight, and walk up from the trench. Face south and you should get a "bleep" on your radar indicating a guard. Use your Night-vision Sniper Rifle, and you'll see the guard across from a window. Give him a head shot, and head to the window you shot. You should see the third fuel tank (1c) so plant the C4 explosive. A guard is directly south of the fuel





tank, so shoot him in the head from afar. Make sure to grab the Combat Shotgun next to the truck-like vehicle before heading south into the long trench.

Heading south, don't walk into the new long trench; walk to the left of it. You'll





come upon two guards right next to each other conversing behind some explosive barrels. Again, Gas Grenades to the rescue! This time, sneak behind the explosive barrels and manually aim the





grenade for the heads of the two guards. Right behind you, the fourth fuel tank is found here (1d), so set the C4 down, grab the ammo from the dead guards, shoot the searchlight, and head in a southeast direction into the new area. Here, the area is complete empty and you'll see the fifth and final fuel tank north of here. However, don't rush in blindly and plant the C4 just yet. Head to the niche in the second building, and wait for someone to walk from the east. You might need to walk past the niche a bit, but don't go to far... Garbek and crew







will start walking towards you. As soon as they show up, hide back in that niche and arm yourself with a Gas Grenade. Usually, Garbek will be coming with 2 other guards though sometimes (and by pure luck), he'll show up by himself. As they pass your area, throw the Gas Grenade at them. After the green gas has dissipated, take all their stuff, including the Bunker card key, and head to the last fuel tank (1e) to plant the C4.





Continue heading east from here. A guard will be holed up in the niche of a building, so take him out with a head shot. When you reach the first gate, hit the switch to open the door and you'll be



just south of the Bunker entrance. Now as you approach the switch to open the fence, you should see a guard in the next area. There are actually two guards here, and as soon as you shoot the head of the





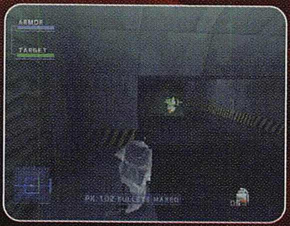
first guard, the second guard will come in view to see where that shot came from. As soon as the second guard stops to look around, shoot him in the head as well, then open the gate.

Once the gate is open, head east since you can't go down the first bunker



entrance. Once you get to the second bunker entrance, wait for a guard to walk up from the bunker (giving you an easy head shot), then proceed in the area. Also, take note of the searchlight that you might want to get rid of. Walk down the ramp of the bunker entrance, and you'll see a guard patrolling across





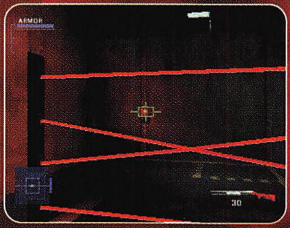
from you. Shoot him in the head, and walk to the area where he was patrolling. If you look into the unexplored bunker area, you should see a couple of guards conversing across the way. Gas Grenades are ideal here, so use them and head for the missile bunker.



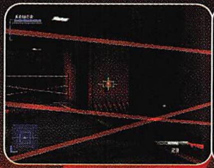




Base Bunker
Objectives:
1) Catalog 10 enemy missiles
2) Reach the communications tower



This level is pretty straightforward, especially since there's no map for this level. To start, there's a box with a Flak Jacket if you've been damaged. No more





sneaking around now, since "supposedly" you tripped off a silent alarm. That's fine... you get to use the louder weapons now. In any case, enemies will be waiting around every corner, so make sure to use the "hug the wall, lean over to the corner, and snipe" technique. You won't face any enemies wearing Flak Jackets until the end of the level. The first missile storage area (1-1)







will be to the left of where you start. Beware when you open the doors to the missile storage area, as guards will be inside. The Combat Shotgun is the weapon of choice here.

As soon as you catalog the first two missiles in Missile Storage Area 1-1, exit and head into the next area. Various guards will charge in, but without wearing Flak Jackets it shouldn't be a problem. There should be three hallways to your left that have lasers guarding them. Take the middle path and shoot the panel across the hallway to disable the lasers. Two guards will run out, so gun them down and head









right. You want to head to Missile Storage Area 2-1. Also, there's a semi-hidden box holding a Flak Jacket in a dead end dark area. Watch out when you open the door to Area 2-1, as there are



two guards here. There are 4 missiles in Missile Storage Area 2-1, and once you activate the computer, each missile will raise for you to identify (go to each missile). Now, head back to Area 1-1 and head up to the last area, Missile Storage Area 1-2.











When you open the door to Missile Storage Area 1-2, no guards will be inside, but as soon as you go in, a guard will appear right behind so be ready. Again, catalog the last four missiles, and



head up from this area. The area you want to be in is a hallway with a laser net in the middle. This hall leads to the exit, but as soon as you deactivate the laser net two guards WITH FLAK JACKETS will charge at you. So, as soon as you deac-



tivate the laser net, equip a gas grenade, and walk backward facing the entrance of the hall. As soon as you see the two guards run in, toss the grenade at them. Now, head down the hall and you'll find a room with a computer. Activate the com-



puter, and the door will open up to an armory. Go into the armory, but as soon as you see the three guards appear, run out of the room. The first guard will throw an explosive grenade, and as soon as it explodes, run back into the comput-



er room and snipe all the guards in the room (all of whom are wearing Flak Jackets). You'll find a bunch of goodies in this room, none of which will really help you in the next level. Well, grab everything that you can, and take the elevator up to the Base Tower.

Base Tower
Objectives:
1) Disable enemy radar tower
2) Shoot down enemy helicopter

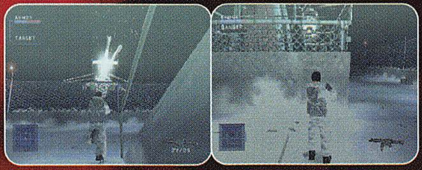
As soon as you reach the tower, deactivate the radar tower. As soon as you do, you'll have to shoot down an attack chopper. While this is similar to the confrontation in *Metal Gear Solid*, you have to shoot it down without a rocket launcher. Oh boy...



First off, only shoot the chopper after it has made its own pass. You'll know when the chopper is about to fire when you see the searchlight. As soon as you hear the chopper firing, roll like your life depends upon it... cuz it does. As soon as it stops firing, use the R1 button to lock on to the chopper and start firing. If you see yellow sparks fly off the chopper, keep firing. If



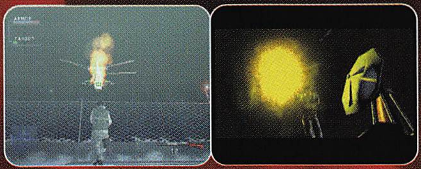
not, stop firing and keep with the same pattern. There are two boxes of PK-102 and two boxes of Flak Jackets, so it shouldn't be too hard taking the chopper out. When it begins smoking, the chopper will vanish for a few seconds. Then it will



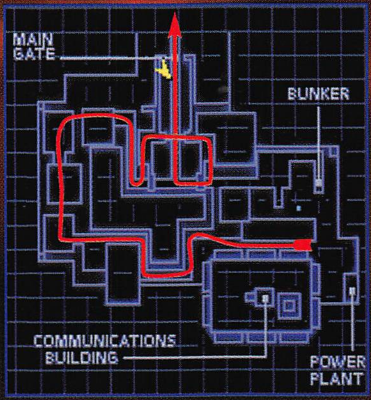
re-appear on one of the four sides of this area and start spraying the whole area with machinegun fire. When it begins this pattern of attack, use the radar tower to block the chopper's attack. When it flies off again, unload as many bullets as you



can. Guards will appear during this attack but without Flak Jackets, they're sitting ducks. Keep up the attack on the chopper, and eventually it'll come crashing down to a flaming death.



Base Escape
GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE!!!

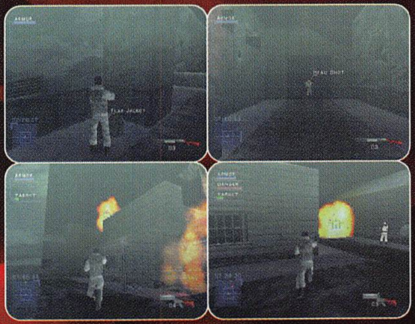


Well, after blowing up the chopper, you'll find yourself close to the Power Plant. A single guard is running away from you, so just gun him down. Now, instead of escaping like you're supposed to, run to where the Power Plant switch is

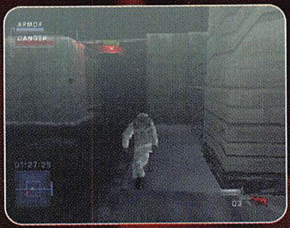


located. A single guard is here and he's wearing armor, so shoot him in the head, and grab the item in the box... which is the always handy M-79 Grenade Launcher. Now, you'll want to head to the front gate exit and unfortunately, you'll have to take the long way around the base, since debris is blocking the easy path.

Head back where you started this level, where a Flak Jacket box is found next to



the wall. Run up a little and a guard will start firing at you. Gun him down, and now, equip the Grenade Launcher and get ready for some running. Basically, you don't wanna hit everyone with the M-79 since you have only a few Grenades. Shoot only at the guys blocking your way. Eventually, you'll find yourself at the cat-



walk with the searchlight. Whatever you do, DON'T JUMP DOWN FROM HERE and head to the front gate. A bug in the



game won't allow you to continue to the next mission if you try this. Always roll when enemies start firing and constantly rolling is common practice here.



Quarter Crunchers

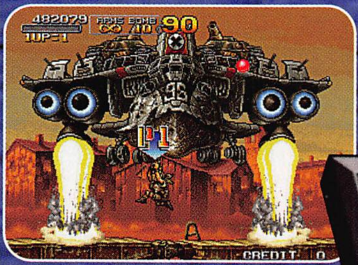


Last Week, In a Dimension Just Through the Looking Glass...

"Will the fun ever stop?! After having just played through Yuji Naka's latest triumph, *Sonic Realms* and Shigeru Miyamoto's latest action adventure masterpiece, *Zelda: The Quest for Link*, I just can't imagine 2D games getting much better. Sure, there was that time, a few years back, with the introduction of Sega's Saturn and Sony's PlayStation, where it looked as if games might take a turn for the worse and go completely 3D, but thankfully, cooler heads prevailed and developers just can't seem to deliver enough parallax-laden, line scrolling, 24-bit hi-color hand-painted masterpieces. Let me tell ya, it would have been a dark world indeed if we all forgot what gaming was about and had completely embraced 3D..."

—Evil ECM, Ed Zone; Bizarro Earth, GameFan Vol. 7, Issue 6



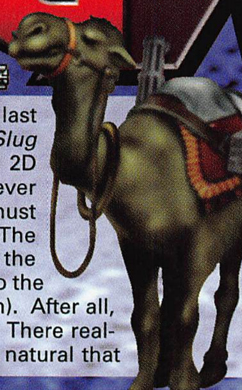






Metal Slug X

Sad, isn't it? Been just about a year since the last installment of SNK's action shooter king, *Metal Slug 2*, and I can count the number of phenomenal 2D games on **one** hand, minus a few fingers, released ever since. I suppose it was inevitable; all good things must come to an end, eh? Heck, even studios like The Neverhood, that formed to further the art (yes, art) of the 2D platformer, have turned their considerable talents to the 3rd dimension (hey, they gotta eat... don't blame them). After all, 2D was exploited to its fullest possible extent...right? There really wasn't anywhere left for them to go so it was only natural that the development community (and gamer, of course) dropped it faster than Carmen Elektra dumped Dennis Rodman (the second time... heh). Well, it appears that SNK isn't totally convinced, which is why we have the next chapter in the achingly fantastic *MS* series: *Metal Slug X*.



So now you're asking, why 'X' and not '3'? That would have to do with the fact that *MSX* is not a full-blown sequel. Perhaps the best way to describe *MSX* would be to call it *Metal Slug 2 Shin Complete* (or some other esoteric Japanese reference to 'excitement' and 'added features'). See, instead of creating a whole new set of graphics and levels, SNK opted to patch together a 'new' *MS* from parts of the old — a new enemy here, a new weapon there — and wrapped them up in 6 totally re-designed levels (but made up of last year's tiles) and voila... *Metal Slug X*.

The Good, The Great, and the Unbelievable

Nope, no bad or ugly here. In fact, everything in this game is so far away from the latest 3D re-tread of the week that I'm desperately trying to understand exactly why gamers can't seem to figure out that there is a better way (relax, this won't explode into a rant... not just yet, anyway). Would it really be that terrible for developers and gamers to go back and take a look



















at where we all came from and try to recreate some of that magic instead of constantly trying to re-invent the wheel? But I digress...

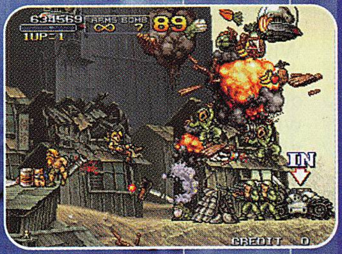
Graphically, SNK has once again proven that there is life left in the quickly fading realm of sprites and parallax (which now appears to reside in some cold, dark corner of SNK HQ). The almost blinding number of frames of animation in this game dwarfs even Capcom's 2D triumph, *Marvel Vs. Capcom* (reviewed elsewhere in this very tome). Every little detail, from Marco laughing haughtily after vanquishing a mechanized monstrosity to a baby crawling away from the wreckage of a burned out truck, is intricately animated — this is what games should be like!

The action sequences in this game would make John Woo green with envy: cars launched into the sky upon geysers of flame; trains riddled with thousands of rounds of ammo de-

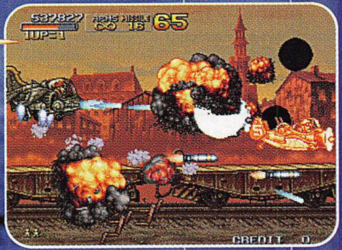
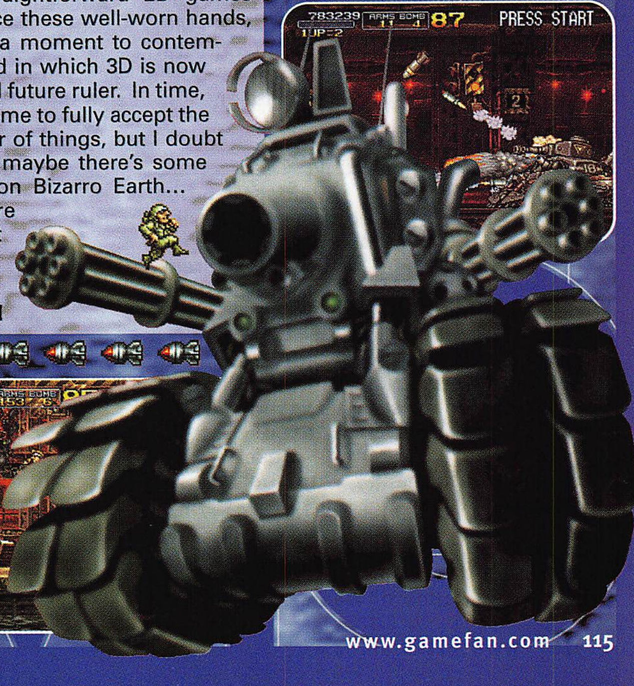



Seeing White...

As is the case with most Neo-Geo games these days, there's an option in the boot up screen of *MSX* to turn the blood 'on' or 'off'. If you opt for off, the 'blood' is white... nothing like exploding into a ball of sweat after being cut down by a hail of shrapnel. Shades of SNES *Mortal Kombat*...<shudder>.





railing and erupting into storms of shrapnel (think the train sequence from *The Fugitive* on crack); and massive, screen-swallowing bosses, armed to the teeth, spewing fire, rockets, and tanks (no really, **big** tanks) — intense isn't the word. All of this manic, over-the-top action does come at a price, though — there is some nasty screen-stopping slowdown, although it isn't nearly as bad as last year's edition (still, at points, you'll be countin' the frames as they go by).

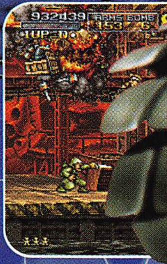
Control is rock-solid; something Konami, former kings of the genre, should note (I'll ask one more time, nicely, for a 2D, kick-ass, Treasure-inspired *Contra*... next time things are gonna get ugly). Sticking and moving through fields of bullets, grenades, shrapnel, and artillery will become second nature in short order — if they don't, well, say 'hi' to the King for me.

Shot In the Knee Caps

So while I drink deeply from one of the last, straightforward 2D games likely to grace these well-worn hands, I must take a moment to contemplate a world in which 3D is now the once and future ruler. In time, maybe I'll come to fully accept the natural order of things, but I doubt it. Hmmm, maybe there's some room over on Bizarro Earth... now where did I put that gingifrication gun?

ECM







Geist Force No More?

Word has it that the development team of *Geist Force* was let go because Bernie Stolar wasn't happy with the progress of the game. Supposedly, members from other teams have been reallocated to the project, in hopes of having it ready by the U.S. launch.

To Modem Or Not To Modem?

While latest reports say the Dreamcast will ship for $200 in the U.S., Sega has continually dodged the question of whether the modem will be packed in as promised. *GameFan* sources have informed us that the modem, in fact, will not come standard with the system because Sega wants to keep the price affordable. However, early indications point to the modem being a pack-in with *Sega Rally 2*.

No ToeJam And Earl For GT

GameFan sources have stated that a *ToeJam and Earl* sequel was in the works, but prospective publisher GT Interactive decided they'd pass on the title because of the slow European sales of *ToeJam and Earl 2: Panic on Funk-o-tron*. Greg Johnson and Mark Voorsanger, the real ToeJam and Earl, are still planning on doing the game, and are shopping for a publisher.

Sega... A Sinking Ship?

Eric Hammon, vice president of business development, and Gretchen Eichinger, vice president of third party licensing, have announced their resignation from Sega. This bit of bad news comes after Dan Stevens, Director of Public Relations, left the company to pursue other interests. Speculation was that there was internal strife within Sega of America. Supposedly, Bernie Stolar, president of Sega of America, was called to Japan because Sega of Japan was unhappy with the progress of the American Dreamcast.

SNK's Unholy Union With Capcom

Because Capcom wasn't getting the level of support they wanted from Sega when it comes to Dreamcast development (Sega is busy focusing their energy on Naomi games at the moment, while Capcom is interested in cross-licensing popular characters), Capcom has found a new partner in SNK. Their first game in development is *King of Fighters vs. Capcom Heroes*, which we had previous thought was *Capcom vs. SNK*. Now, since Capcom of Japan and Sega of Japan have had a recent falling out, the game may not appear on the Dreamcast, but will probably make an appearance in arcades instead... and possibly on the Neo Geo Pocket Color?

64DD Coming Out! (No, we mean it this time!)

The ill-fated peripheral that has been on again, off again over the past year for Nintendo is still supposedly planned for release, though the release date in Japan has been delayed till early 2000. Many games have come and gone that were supposed to have DD compatibility (including *Zelda 64*) and developers are hesitant about supporting it, but the latest claims are that the peripheral **will** come out, at least in Japan. It's supposed to be shown at the Spaceworld show in Japan this summer. Based on how it does in Japan, NoA will decide if it is worth bringing stateside.

Dreamcast Not Living Up To Promises... Already?

Word through the grapevine is that some developers are unhappy with the Dreamcast's ability to push large numbers of polygons (some reports indicate a maximum as low as 450,000 per second), a number which is not living up to Sega's original tech specs. On the other hand, we've got a handful of developers telling us that the system has more power than the 1.21 gigawatts of power necessary to power the flux capica- ...err, nevermind. Suffice it to say, there's an apparent talent gap between certain developers (more like a talent chasm). Now if certain developers are having a hard time hacking it on the 'low-end' of 3 million pps, how are developers going to cope with the proposed specs of the upcoming PlayStation 2?

Sony's PSY Stealing Sega's Thunder

In what is fast becoming the most anti-Sega Other Stuff in history, research is showing that consumer interest in the PSY is hurting Sega already. Following Sony's announcement of the tech specs of the PSY, developers and consumers are wavering a bit in support of the Dreamcast. A telephone survey of 1000 adult consumers done by Fairfield research shows some disturbing results: Awareness of Sony's PSY went from 0% to 44%, while awareness of Sega's Dreamcast remained at a constant 10%.

Pokemon Invasion: Phase Three

Just when you thought it was over, *Pokemon* fever continues to break new ground. The latest conquest... trading cards. Topps, one of the biggest sports card companies, has reached a tenative agreement with Nintendo to produce limited edition *Pokemon* trading cards for U.S. release. Scheduled to come out this summer, the cards are sure to be a hit with younger crowds and non-gamers. "Pi-ka-chu!" Ahhhh!!!

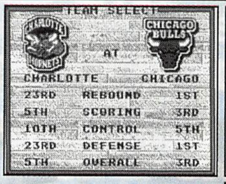
Namco Goes Back To CD With First PSY Title

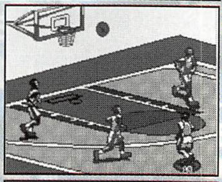
While latest reports were that the PSY would be DVD-format, word has it Namco's first PSY title will be developed as a CD game. This decision was made so that the game can be released on the PSX, in case the PSY's launch is delayed. Since the PSY is also supposed to be backwards compatible, playing a CD game should be no problem for the system. Let's just hope this disturbing trend of developing CD games doesn't spread to other third parties.

Sega has an Ancient Secret...

Industry legend, Yuzo Koshiro is alive and well in Japan. Turns out his development team, Ancient, has been hard at work on a number of PlayStation projects (2 to be exact, one of which is a rumored Action RPG– a newThor game, perhaps?) as well as being involved with some of the programming and music chores on Yu Suzuki's masterpiece, Shen Mue. Now if only we could get Ancient to do a new Bare Knuckle game...

This Is Game.Com?

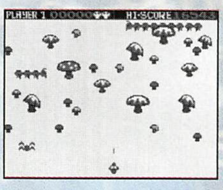


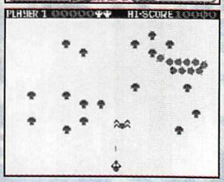






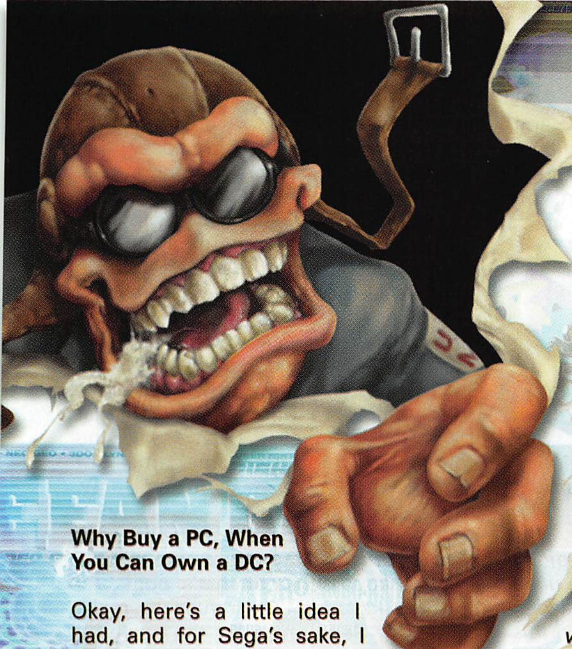
Just thought we'd add these surprising screen shots of a couple of upcoming titles for the Game.Com hand-held from Tiger Electronics. Few of us expected graphics this good! Be sure to check back next issue for more info on Tiger's new portable system.





THE POSTMEISTER!

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!
The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367



Why Buy a PC, When You Can Own a DC?

Okay, here's a little idea I had, and for Sega's sake, I hope I'm not the only one who had it. If you were to market a keyboard, word processing software, disc drive, and a printer (Hey, GameBoy has one!), would you not then have, in the Dreamcast, a $2500 PC for around $500? (Depending on how much said peripherals would cost).

DC's already running on Windows, right? It plays rockin' games, right? It has a modem, right? If it could run off documents, you'd have addressed the needs of 90% of the home PC market, at a fraction of the cost. Yeah, you'd have some problems marketing it — do you really want to enter competition with the PC market? Would Microsoft let them? And would people have a hard time hooking a computer up to their TV? But let's face it — if you could get essentially a 3D accelerated P450 for $199, wouldn't you run out and buy one? And say "Who needs Sony and their 40-watt, linux-based machine?"

It's kind of late here on Strider Island, so I may not be thinking straight, but is there any reason why this could/should not be done??

StriderKyo
Via The Internet

Being the vault of gaming wisdom that I am, I find that there are always those who doubt their own knowledge and skills, and feel compelled to seek me out, prostrating themselves before me in hopes of obtaining just a morsel of my vast knowledge. Well, doubt no more, my friend... I have the answers you need. What you've written makes a lot of sense... It would definitely be both convenient, and inexpensive to make a PC out of your DC.

Unfortunately, as much as we talk about seeing computers and consoles getting closer to each other when it comes to processing muscle, there are some things that will probably never change. ECM will never get in touch with his inner child, my obsession with eliminating the distribution and sale of gelatin-packed, canned meats will never die, and there will never be a time where PCs and consoles merge.

There are lots of reasons for it, but the main one is pretty easy to see. Consoles are made specifically to play video games... they are the be-all, end-all solution to gaming compatability. You never have to worry about your Dreamcast not being able to play the latest DC game. You won't have to play with config settings, or IRQ conflicts, or jump through any of the cyber-hoops PC users deal with every day. Unfortunately, that also means you won't have the huge flexibility that PC users enjoy, either.

If you just want to play games, stick with consoles. But if you want the best of both worlds — the thrill of Quake 2, *and the ecstasy of balancing an enormous spreadsheet — drop a few thousand dollars into a Pentium III, and strap yourself in. As for me, I'll stick with playing games in the safety of my cavernous abode, in front of a massive 54" big-screen, with none of the frustration and hair loss that comes with working around computers. Our Internet crew knows... Bubba even shaves his head, so that there's no hair left for him to pull out!*

A Vampire Love Story

Dear Postmeister,

I was wondering if you had some answers for the questions I had for you. Ya see, the questions I'm going to ask you are all about Jedah from *Vampire Savior* (A.K.A. *Darkstalkers 3*). Here are my questions:

1. What is his last name?

2. How old is he?

3. Who is the voice actor of Jedah in *Vampire Savior* (A.K.A. *Darkstalkers 3*)?

I hope you can answer my questions.

Sincerely,

Joan "Angel" Gomez
Orange, New Jersey

At first, this looked like a nice, innocent letter, pleading for more information about Capcom's supernatural brawler. But the more I studied it, I noticed an underlying theme... and now, I'm going to give you the only answer you need.

Jedah is not real. He is a video game character, and he is made of pixels. Jedah, and the entire cast of Darkstalkers 3 *(A.K.A.* Vampire Savior*), will never be as real as I am. What does Jedah have that I don't? I mean, gamers everywhere confront me with their toughest video game questions, and I keep delivering the answers like an unstoppable juggernaut! I'm the pilliar of wisdom, the master of all he surveys, a crazy one-armed pickle man, and yes... a damn handsome man. Yet you would rather know the deepest, darkest secrets of an undead video game character?*

Curse you, Angel — you're the Devil in disguise! I thought we had something, you and I... something special. But you would toss me aside like nothing more than a package of stale Corn Nuts (you realize, of course, that they are not of this earth), in favor of Jedah? Well, I hope you two find happiness together.

**Sob* Why, Angel... why?!*

Fighters, RPG's, and Fighting RPG's...

Dear Postmeister,

First off, I would like to say that GameFan is my favorite mag, and will always be as long as I'm a gamer. No other mag beats the style, the info, and the quality of your work... AND you guys kick ass!!! Keep it up!

Now to the questions:

1. What is the validity of the rumors surrounding *Chrono Trigger*'s sequel on the PS2? Please tell me it's more than a rumor!

2. I want all the juicy tidbits you can give me for *Tekken 4*.

3. I'm the biggest *Street Fighter* fan out there, and wanted to know if there's going to be a *SF4* or not. I heard that *SF Alpha 3* and *SF 3: Third Impact* are the last *SF*'s ever.

4. And what about a *Street Fighter* RPG? or a *Megaman* RPG?

Take care Posty.

Sifu Ryu
Via The Internet

That warm, fuzzy feeling I've got right now can mean only one of two things: either I'm sitting on an exposed electrical wire again, or yet another gamer is sucking up to GameFan!

You have taste, Sifu... that much we know. You're fully aware that there's only one place to come for the straight dope, and that's to throw yourself on the mercy of the man who knows everything before anybody else: The mighty Postmeister!

1. I've sniffed around long and hard for the 4-1-1 on a new Chrono Trigger, *but Square is keeping a pretty tight lid on it. The most I can tell you is that it's a really strong rumor, but for what system, we just don't know... yet. Posty's on the case, though.*

2. Juicy tidbits on Tekken 4*... hrm. Well, it'll probably be 3-D, there will probably be fighting involved, and maybe even some secret characters! You guessed it... there aren't many details yet. Right now, Namco is focusing on* Tekken Tag Tournament, *which contains characters from all three* Tekken *games — so they aren't saying much about the future.*

3. Call me crazy (everybody does!), but Capcom hasn't exactly demonstrated the ability to close out a popular series. Resident Evil, Megaman, Street Fighter *— sequel after sequel, for years and years. I'll be real surprised when they finally kill this one off...*

4. Right now, the only fighter-based RPG that springs to mind is SNK's Samurai Spirits RPG, *and that was never translated to English — a fact that makes many Neo-CDz owners weep openly whenever you talk about it. Something tells me* Street Fighter *wouldn't make much of an RPG, because even the anime is heavy on action, light on storyline. As for my close, personal friend, Rockman, the nearest he's come to starring in an RPG is* Megaman Legends, *an action/adventure for the PSX, which took him as far away from platforming action as any of his fans were comfortable with.*

Son Goku, Mano-a-Mano With Link?

Dear GameFan,

Your magazine is the best out there! But I have one question. Why doesn't Nintendo or PlayStation or GameBoy make a game on *Dragon Ball Z*? All those *DBZ* fans would sure love to play as Goku, Krillin, Gohan, etc... in 2D and 3D (including me)! It will probably be a great hit like *Street Fighter* and others (I mean BIG like *Zelda: OOT*!!) Can you see what's up? Thanx.

Luv your Mag,

Heather J.
Waldorf, Maryland

Well, Heather, you started out strong. I thought to myself, "Self, here's a girl of obvious taste and discrimination. She sees GameFan as the pillar of gaming excellence that it truly is, and all is right with the world."

Unfortunately, that blissful feeling didn't last very long, because you felt the need to mention Dragon Ball Z *and video games in the same sentence... and this whole house of cards came tumbling down around me.*

See, the fact that you missed the three Dragon Ball *games that have already come and gone on PlayStation should tell you something. "What can this mean?" you ask? Because* Dragon Ball *games usually stink worse than El Niño's wrestling tights after a long workout with Big Bubba's pet swine, Ned.*

Dragon Ball GT *was released for the PlayStation in America, and it bombed. I consulted with the fighting game masters here at GameFan about any* Dragon Ball *title that might approach the perfection of* Street Fighter, *and we all united our voices in a hearty round of laughter. When the noise died down, we all agreed that* Dragon Ball Legends *(for PlayStation or Saturn) is probably your best bet, so if you're feeling saucy (and I know you are), you can hit the import shops and see if they'll hook you up with a special order.*

The entire staff of GameFan thanks you for your amusing letter, but we wonder: does money grow on trees, do pigs fly, and is Hell frozen over, in the fantasy world which you live in? I mean, I may live in a cave and harbor an unhealthy compulsion to warehouse frozen foods of various kinds, but even I know that there is no way Goku or Gohan can stand against the incredible might of Link, while wielding the Master Sword!

Postmeister's Lists of Fury...

You're one of the few people (thankfully!) to answer any or most gamers questions on a regular basis, so let's see if you can answer this!

1. Where do you see the future of gaming going with systems achieving insane poly counts (PSX2, etc.)? I think after Sony or Nintendo's next machine, graphical limits will be met to the human eye. Where do we go after a projected 5-7 years after their release?
2. I really don't care how many games, or systems Sega sells (2 million to keep the system alive or whatever), as long as the great games keep coming, no one really cares! Look at the N64! Sega has the in-house development. Their arcade games are addictive (yet sometimes ridiculously expensive to play!) and fun as hell. People (in general) want those Sega ARCADE games with those exact great graphics at home. People will get it with the Dreamcast. That's really the only reason (and Capcom games, of course) why I'm down with Sega now. What do you think?
3. Is Square just fully anti-Sega or what?! I heard they might take a wait-and-see approach, but that's bull! All these years, and they refuse to make games for Sega, even for the powerful Dreamcast... what up?

4. Last question. Will anybody port an enhanced version of *Final Fantasy VIII* for the Dreamcast like they did *FF7* for the PC? With the DC's Windows, it would be ideal since we all know Square won't do it themselves!

I know these are tough questions, but you have a knack for answering them. Don't let us gamers down! We need to know!

Bobby
Via The Internet

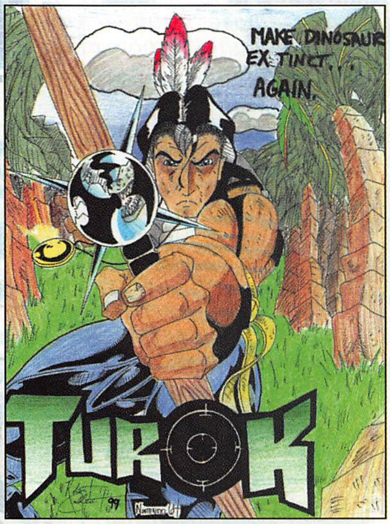
You couldn't be more right to bring your questions to me, Bobby. Because I know all, and see all in the world of games. I will not disappoint you, or the legions of Posty-fans around the world, who depend on my words of wisdom, in order to maintain a peaceful balance in their gaming lives. Let it be known to all our readers: Posty fears the list of no man (or woman)!

1. Yes, video games are getting more and more advanced. The realism of these games occasionally makes me forget that I live in a dank, dimly-lit cave deep beneath GameFan Headquarters, and that I am paid a mere five dollars a month for my postal services. I can't tell you how much I look forward to the future of games, where systems transport us to new worlds and distant lands, through the miracle of holographic projection technology and other, even more insane display types. Maybe you won't even SEE video games in the future... maybe you'll jack directly into the brain, and experience these things as if they were real! Whoa... what if the writers behind the Keanu Reeves blockbuster film, The Matrix, *were right? What if this is all just one big video game, and we're all stuck inside? Ok, time for some breathing excercises...*

2. You said it! This magazine isn't called SystemFan, it's GameFan... we're all about playing video games, and if it's good, we're all over it like white on rice, in a glass of milk, on a paper plate, in a snowstorm. Right now, we're into the Dreamcast and all the mysteries she holds, but any other system that comes tumbling down the pike (can you say PlayStation 2?) will get equal time, if the games are there.

3. Square's always been a one-system developer. For a long time, they were delivering the goods for Nintendo and only Nintendo... and when they decided to jump into Sony's pocket, the whole world was amazed and shocked. If Square thinks they can make more money by developing games for the Dreamcast, they'll make yet another leap... but I wouldn't count on it. Nobody doubts Sony's ability to put systems in homes, so Square will probably continue to enjoy the scenery, deep within Sony's ultra-deep pockets.

4. There's no way Final Fantasy VIII *will show up on Dreamcast, because that would require Square's approval... which would require Sony's approval, and I'm afraid they just wouldn't approve. After all,* Final Fantasy VII *is one of their flagship, blockbuster titles, and they wouldn't be too keen on the competition having that particular weapon in their arsenal.*



Choose: Great Games, or Great Specs?

What's goin' on Posty!?! I just had a quick question. Do you think that the quality and vast amount of games coming out for the Dreamcast will allow it to compete with the technically superior PSY? After all, the N64 is supposed to be a notch higher than the PlayStation and most of its games look better, but the PlayStation still continues to outsell it? What do you think?

Oscar
Via the Internet

If I had a dime for every time I've been asked this question over the years, I wouldn't be nearly as bitter about my measly $5/month salary here at GameFan. It's really a much simpler question than this, Oscar — do you buy video game systems because you like playing games, or because the hype over specs was so compelling that you were caught at the register like a deer in the headlights. I've seen it happen, folks... it's not pretty.

Looks to me like you answered your own question here, though. Do I think the vast amount of games will compete with Sony's latest batch of system specs? Sometimes, it is not the mighty wisdom of Posty that educates the gaming masses... sometimes it is one lone gamer, with a burning desire for truth, who answers it for himself.

Nah, who am I kidding? It's usually me.

The Oldest Question in Import Gaming

I recently purchased an Asian Dreamcast which I like very much. Have you heard anything about compatibility between the Asian and American Dreamcast soon to be released?

Howard
Via the Internet

For those of you that don't already know, Sega released two versions of the Dreamcast, which fans around the world quickly emptied their bank accounts to pick up. I have a similar problem — when I get that monthly paycheck, and feel the uncontrollable desire to leap into my Postal 4x4 and rush to the store for my fix of Pepsi, Twinkies, and frozen goods of various kinds. I can't possibly explain it... it's just something I accept about myself, and I guess import gamers are the same way.

The Japanese Dreamcast was packed with the modem and internet software, and all the documentation was in Japanese. The Asian one contained no modem, and all the instructions were in English. Because many gamers like Howard didn't think the modem was necessary, and wanted to be able to read the docs, they picked up the Asian model.

Unfortunately, the chances are real good that both models are going to have the same problem playing American games. There is a time-honored tradition among console manufacturers to make life really difficult on import gamers, by including country code lockouts, making the systems themselves physically different so cartridges from other regions won't fit... basically, anything that will make importers miserable.

Until we've got some American games to try out, we won't know for sure. But I can tell you right now that we'll all be shocked if Sega doesn't continue the lockout tradition... so I wouldn't bet on it. Maybe there will be a converter, maybe there won't... So if you don't want to keep playing imports when the system is launched over here, you'd better save your cash till September, and pick up the American version.

Are Side-scrollers Becoming Extinct?

Ahhhhh! Posty! Emergency!!! I too am from an underground video game society. Unlike you hardworking guys, we just play 'em instead of reviewing 'em — so far. Anyway, last night after playing *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* for a few hours, I popped in *Yoshi's Story*. Well sure, the graphics are nice, it is fun, but STILL, it's absolute CRAP compared to *SMW2: Yoshi's Island* for the SNES. After playing the game I ran downstairs and played *Yoshi's Island* for about an hour straight just to get the disappointment outta my head that I always get after playing *YS*. Posty, PLEASE tell me that you guys have heard that there will a sequel to *YS* and PLEASE tell me that you heard that it will be much better than the first and more like *SMW2:YI* and Miyamoto's other great side-scrollers. Know of any other in-house Nintendo side-scrollers in the works? Think there might be an E3 announcement on any new 2D Nintendo titles?. Any info you can give us would be greatly appreciated, Oh Almighty Poster-geist, cuz we got a major side-scroller crisis on our hands here!!!!!

Gamera3
Via the Internet

I feel your pain, Gamera... but nobody, and I mean NOBODY, beats up on my man Godzilla and gets away with it. I don't care if you do have fire and sparks coming out of the holes where your legs should be, that's just no excuse. Godzilla is the king of monsters, you have to show respect. In the words of the only true monarch in film, Bruce Campbell: "Hail to the king, baby!"

Unfortunately, the Nintendo 64 has never been real big on 2-D, and Yoshi's Story *was a pretty painful reminder of that. The Big N seems to have all but abandoned the unfathomable might of their 2-D past, in favor of happily jumping aboard the 3-D bandwagon of the late 1990's. However, side-scrolling excellence survives (*Metal Slug X*), so all is not lost, my hard-shelled friend.*

Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder...

First off let me say, that I missed you guys greatly while you were gone. (sniff sniff) Okay enough of that, lets get on with the ranting.

1. I am thinking about ordering *Evolution* for my Dreamcast, but noticed you guys do not have any info on it. I found plenty of info elsewhere, but I rely on you guys to give the straight up info and opinions on my purchases.

2. Any news on whether a network card will be released for DC in Japan?

3. When are you getting that raise ECM promised you? It's time to move into a cave with plumbing.

Before I say adios, I want to let you guys know how hard I laughed reading the intro to your *Sonic Adventure* article in GameFan. Reminds me of why I like your magazine more and more every issue.

Jya Matta ne,

Jonathan
Via the Internet

Hey, wherever there are gamers seeking knowledge, I'm there. Whenever gamers need a lift or a laugh, GameFan delivers. We are your magazine, and we feel your love... it is the only comfort we have during the stress of deadlines, and through every hour we spend playing bad games. I'd shed a little tear, if I could cry... but as you all know, it is something I cannot do.

1. You are right to come to us for the final word, but we have yet to review Evolution. *The game has a flood of Japanese text, which makes life hard on "gaijin" game-reviewers. However, the game looks very nice, just as most DC stuff does. Sounds like you know a little Japanese, yourself... what's stoppin' ya?*

2. There has been some talk of a network-gaming add-on for the DC that will allow connections between multiple systems in the same room. We haven't seen anything on it yet, but networked gaming is much more popular here in the States than it is in Japan... If you asked me, a network card would be more popular than suntan lotion at a bald men's convention over here!

3. Raise? Hey, I'm just happy to finally have working water and heat, my friend. My presidential campain has had one really nice side-effect though: campaign contributions! I've got all the special interests that matter backing me: People Against Canned Meat, People For Legalized Skull-Thumping, and of course, the Posty For President Fund is in full effect. So I'm managing... of course, feel free to mail your campaign contributions here to my cave — let me know how much you care!

The Sheer Power of Sucking Up...

To the awesome power that is the Postmeister:

1. I heard *Shenmue* is supposed to max out the Dreamcast's power. Is this true?

2. Are there any first-person shooters heading to the dreamcast? How do they look?

3. I heard some rumors that a *Street Fighter* game is in the works for Dreamcast that will feature modem support. Is this true?

I hope that is enough questions for your caffeine-loving self, oh wise, accurate, and ingenious Post-Fu Master.

Erik
Via the Internet

Ahh, yet another of my well-trained Internet Posty-fans has submitted his questions, in hopes of a positive outcome. Because he has been trained so well, he knows that a generous helping of butt-kissing is a sure way of seeing his letter in print... and so he has humbled himself before me, and done the dirty deed. And because I am a Postman of honor, I will answer his fine questions as only I can.

1. Shen Mue's power cannot be denied. With every new glimpse we get of this incredible adventure/rpg, the pants-wetting claims yet another new victim. Two hundred staffers working on the game, a budget reaching far into the millions... oh, it's bound to be something special.

2. Well, right now everything is rumors. I think you'll see games like Unreal, Turok, and many more, as soon as the system is released in America. Don't get your undergarments caught in a wad, my friend... they will come.

3. There has been talk that Street Fighter *Alpha 3 will feature some kind of modem support, but what that means is up in the air. Standard 56k modems just don't seem fast enough for speedy head-to-head play over phone lines...*

Skate Or Die, Dudes!

Almighty king of frozen food, I was just wondering if there are any plans of releasing any skateboarding games for the N64. Also, is there going to be another *Zelda* title for the N64?

PinkEye009
Via the Internet

ESPN2 fans, and scabby-kneed skateboarders everywhere have no shortage of cool (and not-so-cool) extreme sports titles to take advantage of. Unfortunately, not many of them end up on the Nintendo 64. You've got Airboardin' USA, *and... that's about it. You can get your wintery groove on with stuff like* 1080° Snowboarding, *but there just aren't a lot of options available to armchair shredders who own Nintendo's little beast.*



Since you're all so afraid of showing your faces here in the pages of GameFan, (and from the look of some of those pictures, I can see why), I thought I'd show off some of the cool letter art we get, instead. The mighty Turok comes alive in an illustration by Robert Cathcart, from Elkhart Indiana (p. 119). By the way, Rob... nice white-out work on that stray "s". The slick Street Fighter Zero 3 *collage above comes from "Bahn," a GameFan chat regular, and keen pencil artist. Good work, Bahn, you've got mad skillz, yo.*

Keep those submissions coming, or you'll force me to invoke the edict that strikes fear into the hearts of our Internet readers, the mighty P.T.F.F. (Punch That Freak in the Face) law! Until next month, remember: No man can stand against the fury of Post-Fu...




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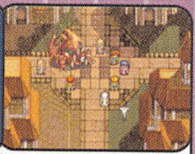
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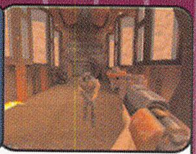
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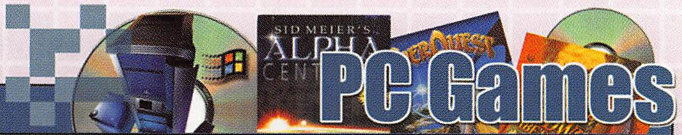
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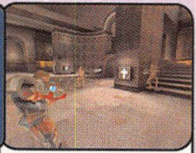
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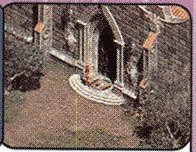
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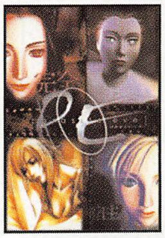

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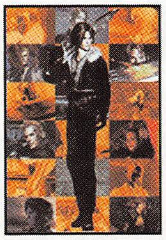

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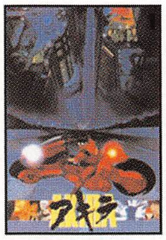
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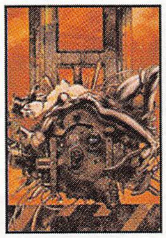

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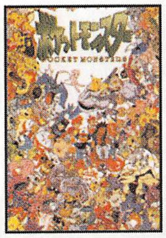

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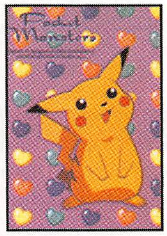

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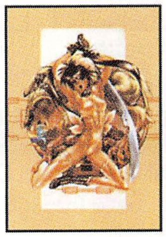


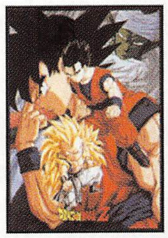
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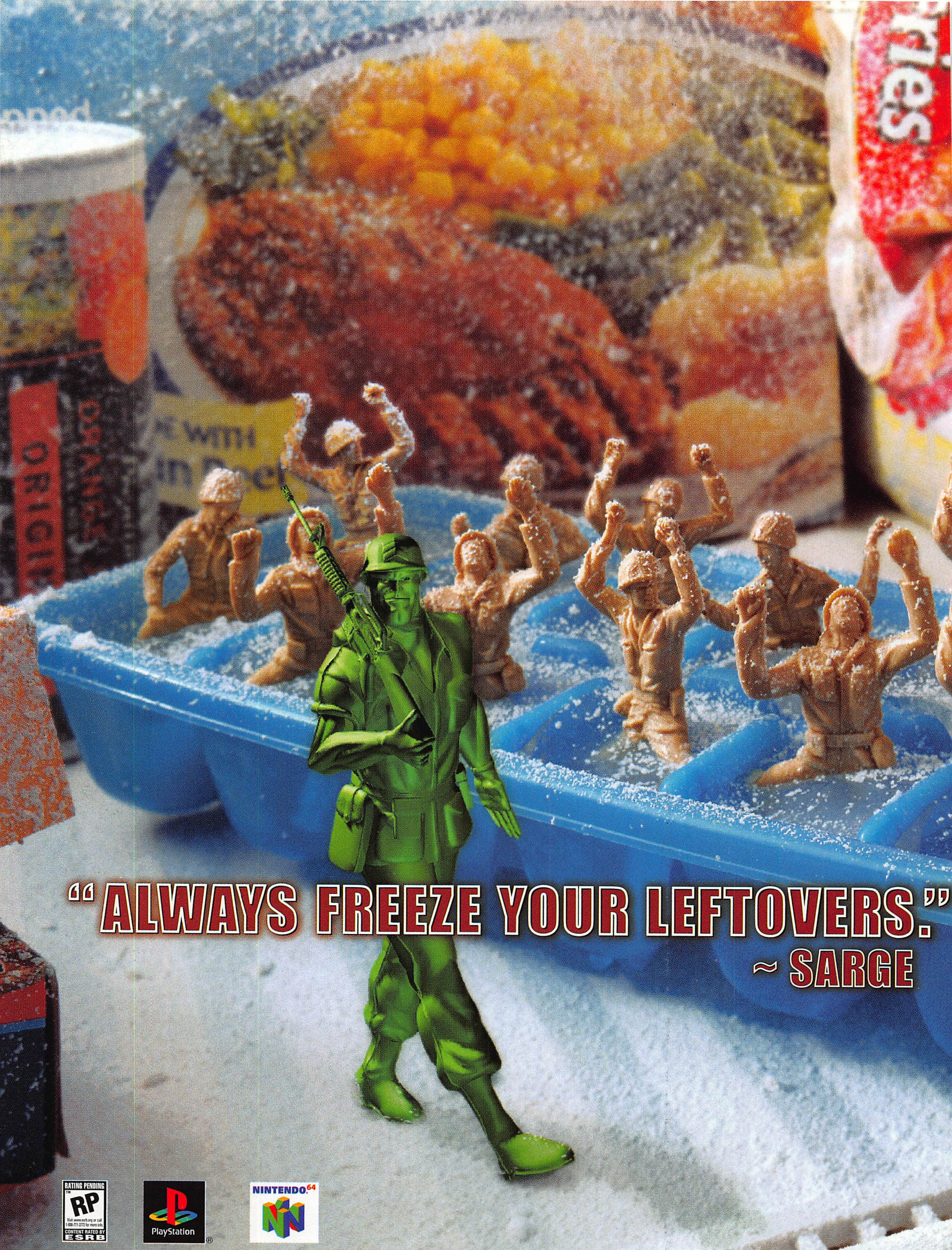

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